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ETHNOGRAPHICAL SURVEY OF THE MISKITO AND SUMU INDIANS OF HONDURAS AND NICARAGUA

By EDUARD CONZEMIUS

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

Smithsonian Institution,
Bureau of American Ethnology,
Washington, D. C., June 2, 1931.

Sir: I have the honor to transmit herewith a manuscript entitled "Ethnographical Survey of the Miskito and Sumu Indians of Honduras and Nicaragua," by Eduard Conzemius, and to recommend that it be published as a bulletin of the Bureau of American Ethnology.

Very respectfully yours,

M. W. Stirling,
Chief.

Dr. C. G. Abbot,
Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution.

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CONTENTS

000

	Page
Introduction	1
General remarks on the Miskito	12
General remarks on the Sumu	14
Relationship of the Miskito and Sumu	16
Physique: Personal characteristics	19
Clothing	22
Bodily ornamentation and decoration	24
Deformation of body	28
Dwellings	29
Household furnishings	32
Domestic utensils	33
Tools	35
Division of labor	39
Trade and barter	40
Metal working	41
Stonework	42
Carved rocks	44
Rubber collecting	46
Manufacture of bark cloth	47
Ceramics	48
Cotton textiles	50
Other handicrafts	52
Navigation and canoe making	54
Domestication of animals and birds	57
Agriculture	60
Fishing and fishing implements	65
Hunting and fighting implements	73
The chase	77
Warfare	81
Culinary arts: Methods of food preparation	88
Food adjuncts: Narcotics, stimulants, excitants, etc	91
Nonfermented beverages	95
Intoxicating beverages	98
Government and social organization	101
Laws: Crime and its punishment	102
Character	104
Personal names	105
Salutations	107
Time reckoning	108
Musical and signaling instruments	111
Amusements: Songs, dances, story-telling, games, and sports	113
Hygiene: Diseases and their cure	118
Religion: Supreme being, tribal heroes, spirits, creation of man, deluge, Christianization	126
Superstitious beliefs: Omens, charms, amulets, talismans, etc	132
Magic and sorcery: Sukya, okuli, spiritist, obeah or voodooism	139

v

CONTENTS

000

	Page
Marriage and sexual life	145
Children: Their birth and education	150
Death and mourning	153
Burial customs	155
The hereafter	158
The festival of the dead	161
Miscellaneous beliefs regarding fictitious beings said to inhabit the forest and the water	165
Fables or tales dealing with beasts and birds	169
Glossary	171
Bibliography	173
Index	179

ILLUSTRATIONS

000

PLATES

		Page
1.	*a*, Net carrying bag made from the fiber of the pita or silk grass plant. Sumu of Rio Patuca. *b*, Saddle bag made by the hispanized Sumu of upper Rio Grande	50
2.	Four cotton girdles and a piece of cotton cloth to be used in making a hunter's bag. Sumu of Rio Bocay and Rio Waspuk	50
3.	Spindles and spindle whorls. Sumu of Rio Bocay and Rio Waspuk	50
4.	Hammock made from the bast fiber of the [illegible] tree. Miskito of Rio Platano	50
5.	Decorated calabash vessels. Sumu of upper Rio Grande	54
6.	Beadwork. Miskito and Sumu of Rio Coco	54
7.	Beadwork. Miskito and Sumu of Rio Coco	54
8.	Beadwork. Miskito and Sumu of Rio Coco	54
9.	Model of "pitpan," a flat-bottomed canoe for river navigation. Model of "dori," a keeled canoe for sea and lagoon navigation. Sumu of lower Rio Escondido	54
10.	Harpoons made from triangular files. Miskito	54

TEXT FIGURE

1.	Carved rocks from the Kiwras Rapids (Rio Coco)	45

ETHNOGRAPHICAL SURVEY OF THE MISKITO AND SUMU INDIANS OF HONDURAS AND NICARAGUA

By Eduard Conzemius

INTRODUCTION

131 The Miskito and Sumu inhabit the Atlantic side of Honduras and Nicaragua, from Rio Tinto or Black River (lat. 15° 50′ N.) to Rio Punta Gorda (lat. 11° 30′ N.). While the Miskito are found chiefly along the coast the Sumu are an inland tribe and extend westward within a short distance from the settlements of the Spanish-speaking population.

Together these two tribes occupy the larger part of the vast region generally known by the name of Mosquito Coast. This territory reaches from Cabo Honduras, near Trujillo, to Rio San Juan, at the Costa Rica boundary; that is, from the eleventh to the sixteenth degree north, an extension of about 550 miles by sea. From Cabo Honduras the coast runs at first in an easterly direction, then southeast as far as Cabo Gracias a Dios, whence it extends nearly due south.

103 Columbus, who discovered the country in 1502, gave the name *Costa de Orejas* "Coast of the Ears" to that part situated to the west of Cabo Gracias a Dios. The southern district of the Mosquito Coast became known in those days as *Cariay* or *Cariari*, *Veragua* or *Beragua*, *Castilla del Oro* "Golden Castile." These names were superseded by the Spanish-Mexican terms *Taguzgalpa* and *Tologalpa*, which stuck practically throughout the colonial period.

The name "Mosquito Coast" (Mosquito Territory or Mosquito Shore), employed by the English, has been taken from that of the principal Indian tribe, the Miskito, erroneously called Mosquito; the Spaniards translated it into *Mosquitia* and *Costa de Mosquitos* (*Costa Mosquita*). Many believe that this name has arisen from the numerous mosquitoes to be found in the country, while others think that the small islands off the coast, "which lie as thick as mosquitoes," may have caused the appellation.

133 **Orography.**—The shore of the Mosquito Coast is partly alluvial and partly coralline; to the south of Cabo Gracias a Dios the land is gaining on the sea, but to the north of that cape the reverse appears to be the case.

133 In front of the coast, especially from Caratasca Lagoon to Monkey Point, or Punta Mico, are scattered numerous small islands, cays, coral reefs, shoals, and sand banks, which render navigation rather difficult.

The land rises gradually from the sea. The transverse ranges, radiating from the principal chain in the interior, form a series of terraces which gradually lessen in elevation until they disappear in the low coastal region. Low hills are met with at about 100 to 150 miles inland. Small isolated hills exist at different points within a short distance from the shore, and at Punta Mico and westward of Iriona spurs of the great central chain extend to the sea.

There are no active volcanoes. Earthquakes are not of frequent occurrence and they never do any damage; the heavy thunder occasionally conveys the impression that the earth is shaking.

133-481 Hydrography.—The whole of this area is well watered by numerous streams running nearly parallel to each other; they flow into the Caribbean Sea, or rather into a chain of so-called lagoons or brackish water seas, of which the largest one is that of Caratasca. These water sheets are situated parallel with the coast and are separated from the sea, as well as from each other, by low, narrow, sandy necks of land, called locally "haulovers," from the custom of dragging the canoes over them. Thanks to this inland water system, canoes may proceed in smooth water, except for short intervals, from Iriona to Bluefields, thus avoiding the dangerous and unpleasant sea voyage during rough weather.

The rivers are in many parts the only means of communication. In the lower part of their course they are navigable for small sailing vessels, flat-bottomed steamboats, and motor boats. Beyond the region of the falls and rapids only small canoes and pitpans may continue, and they with great difficulty. The largest rivers of the Mosquito Coast are the following: Aguan, Tinto, Patuca, Coco (or Wanks), Grande (or Great), Escondido (or Bluefields), and San Juan.

During flood times these streams rise tremendously, occasionally as much as 40 feet during a single night. The crumbling banks bring down trees which, sweeping down the rapid current, render navigation dangerous. At places where the banks are low the neighboring country is inundated. These floods disappear as rapidly as they come. Owing to the great variations in level to which these rivers are subject, traffic is stopped or impeded occasionally; during the rainy season on account of the great impetuosity of the water and during the dry season from inadequate draft. In this respect Rio San Juan is an exception, the steadiness of its flow being maintained by the two great lakes of Nicaragua which act like a reservoir, and of which it is the only outlet.

The sediment, trees, logs, and the like, brought down by the rivers 133 are deposited at their mouth at the sea, thus forming dangerous sand 481 banks with only a few feet of water, which can be crossed in safety only by vessels of little draft. These openings into the sea, or bars, as they are called, are much safer when the streams flow first into a lagoon, instead of directly into the sea, for in that case the sediment is deposited in the lagoon.

CLIMATE.—The climate of the country is tropical, but it is greatly 132 modified by the configuration of the soil and the prevailing winds. The nights are always cool. The average temperature is about 80° F. (26° C.); the thermometer rarely registers higher than 90° F. (32° C.) or falls below 65° F. (17° C.). January is the coldest month of the year.

The country is not as unhealthy as is generally supposed. The old English authors considered it fairly good, and there is no justification for the bad reputation it has now, not only among Europeans and North Americans but also among the Central Americans inhabiting the highlands of the interior or the Pacific slope. Numerous foreigners have lived in the country many years and have retained their health. Unless one is particularly susceptible to malaria or other tropical diseases, no bad effects are liable to attend a prolonged sojourn in the country, provided proper care is taken.

The cool sea breeze, which blows almost constantly around the lagoons, renders the air fresh and agreeable. During eight months of the year the east trades blow nearly uninterruptedly and greatly modify the effects of the heat, so that the latter is never suffocating. The great difference from our own climate does not consist so much in the higher temperature recorded as in the absence of really cold weather, which contributes so much to the vigor and "pep" of northern people.

From November to February northers may appear on the Nicaraguan coast, but they are not so dangerous to navigation as on the shore of Honduras. During a wet norther the weather is disagreeably cold, but a dry norther is pleasant and invigorating. From the middle of June to the middle of August the Nicaraguan coast is subject to squalls and sudden gusts of wind from the southeast and the south, which are a great danger to seagoing canoes. Revolving storms, commonly called hurricanes, occur occasionally on the coast, but they are never so violent and destructive as in the West Indies or around the Gulf of Mexico.

RAINFALL.—One may practically speak of two dry and two wet seasons on the Mosquito Coast. But these seasons are not well defined; the change from the rainy to the dry period, or vice versa, is not as marked as in the interior of Central America or on the Pacific

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932

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132 coast. The rainfall is enormous, especially at San Juan del Norte or Greytown. According to the records of the Nicaragua Canal Co. over 296 inches fell at the latter place in 1890, which makes it perhaps the wettest area in America.

The northeast trade winds, which prevail on the Mosquito Coast, become saturated with moisture as they pass over the Caribbean Sea, which is precipitated as they meet the ranges of hills in the interior. Rarely does it rain, however, the whole day long; heavy showers, accompanied by violent winds, pour down enormous quantities of rain, after which the sun makes its appearance again. During the rainy season entire days may pass without a single drop of rain, while, on the other hand, light showers are frequent during the so-called dry season.

Roughly speaking, north of Rio Patuca the *verano* "summer," or dry season, lasts from the middle of February to the middle of May, and again from the beginning of August to the end of September. The remainder of the year is known as *invierno* "winter," or rainy season. The wettest and most disagreeable month of the year is October. The heavy rains pouring down during this month are known as *chubascos* among the Ladinos; they correspond to the *temporales* of the interior and to the *tapayagües* of the immediate Pacific coast.

South of Rio Patuca the rainy season lasts from May to January, with occasional spells of fair weather in September and sometimes also in October. The heaviest rains occur in June and July and are accompanied by thunder and lightning. These thunderstorms disappear as quickly as they come and give way to bright sunshine. April is the driest month of the year, but it is never free from numerous light showers.

137 VEGETABLE KINGDOM.—The difference in the rainfall between the two coasts of Central America is manifested in the contrasting aspect of the forests. Under the stimulating influence of the moist climate, which reigns practically throughout the year, the Mosquito Coast maintains an exuberant growth of vegetation and the forests never lose their brilliant evergreen foliage. On the Pacific slope, however, where long periods of drought check vegetative vigor, the forests present during the dry season an autumnal appearance, relieved by green stripes along the rivers. In the latter region may be observed the curious habit, possessed by several unrelated species, of producing flowers and fruits while the tree is entirely leafless.

Immediately along the seashore the soil is sandy and there is little vegetation, but it is partly fitted for pastures owing to the annual overflow of the rivers. Beyond this coastal region extends a strip of swampy land, about 15 to 20 miles wide, which is largely unfit for cultivation and is covered with a dense and impenetrable thicket of mangroves, reeds, and coarse grasses. Then follows the real tropical forest with very fertile soil, consisting on the surface of vegetable humus. In order to penetrate the forest the hunter has to cut his way through the tangled mass of vines and epiphytes with the aid of his machete. 137

North of Rio Patuca the fertile areas are characterized by the existence of extensive "cohune ridges," that is, places dotted with the cohune or corozo palm (*Attalea* sp.). A great number of other palms are found in this region, but only two of them are cultivated and play an important part in the food supply, the coco palm and the pejivalle. Among the other tree forms characteristic of the forest may be mentioned the following: Ceiba (*Ceiba pentandra* Gaertn.), mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla* King), Spanish or West Indian cedar (*Cedrela* sp.), rosewood, rubber tree (*Castilla* sp.), sapodilla (*Sapota sapotilla*), lignum vitae or guayacán (*Tecoma* sp.), Santa Maria or calaba (*Calophyllum brasiliense* var.), and balsa or corkwood (*Ochroma lagopus*). Epiphytic orchids are especially numerous and rare varieties are also found. The strong withes or *bejucos* on the trees are used in basketry and as a tying material. [285]

From Rio Tinto to Rio Grande the dense forest is at times interrupted by large areas of pine ridges or savannas. These are undulating plains covered with gravel or coarse sand, overgrown with grass, myrtaceae, oaks, nances, small fan palms and long leaf or pitch pines. This pine (*Pinus tenuifolia* Benth.) has its southern limit on the Atlantic side of Nicaragua, a little north of Bluefields Bluff, in latitude 12° 5′ north. Few big trees are to be found in these savannas; there is little underbrush, epiphytes and lianas are scarce, and the whole presents a parklike appearance. On the rich alluvial soil on both sides of the streams traversing the savannas grows a dense and luxuriant vegetation resembling the real forest.

ANIMAL KINGDOM.—Zoologically the Mosquito Coast belongs to South America rather than to North America. In this sparsely inhabited region may be found a great number of species of animal life. The largest mammals are the tapir and the manatee; the latter is still an important animal of food for the Indians, but it is getting rare now. 136

In the jungle are found such beasts of prey as the jaguar, the puma or cougar, and the ocelot; a black variety of the jaguar is occasionally met with. The howling monkey, the spider monkey, and the white-faced or capuchin monkey are found on the tree tops; the two last-named ones are, together with two species of deer and two species of peccary, the most important food animals of the Indians. [224]

Three species of anteaters, many armadillos and opossums, and 2-toed and 3-toed sloths may be met with. Among the rodents may be mentioned the agouti, paca, several species of porcupine, squirrels, 136 and rabbits. The raccoon, the coati or pisote, the weasel, the skunk, and the kinkajou are met with in the forests and the otter exists in all the streams.

Alligators and a small species of crocodile infest the rivers, lagoons, [225] and swamps. Several varieties of river turtles or tortoises occur, while the valued hawk's bill, the green turtle, and the loggerhead are caught in the sea. The largest lizards are the iguanas, which occur in several eatable varieties. Poisonous and harmless snakes are numerous.

Man-eating sharks and sawfishes are found in the sea and in the lower course of the streams.

The "john crow" or turkey buzzard is a useful scavenger. During the winter months many of the common North American birds arrive as immigrants and spend the cold season in this mild climate. Guans, curassows, mountain hens, wild ducks, and pigeons are esteemed as food. Trogons, orioles, toucans, tanagers, macaws, parrots, parrakeets, and humming birds make themselves conspicuous by their plumage or by their song. Flamingos, white egrets, and herons are found chiefly around the lagoons and swamps.

The mosquitoes are the propagators of malaria, while red bugs, ticks, cockroaches, jiggers, sandflies, and screw worms are largely responsible for the prevailing skin troubles.

361 INHABITANTS.—The humid tropical climate, combined with the jungle vegetation, have retarded settlement and the building up of a dense population. The bulk of the inhabitants of the Mosquito Coast are found along the seashore and on the lower part of the larger rivers.

000 Besides the *Miskito* and *Sumu*, with whom the present monograph will deal, two other Indian tribes inhabit the Mosquito Coast, the *Paya* and *Rama*. The former live in Honduras between Rio Patuca and Rio Sico. Their number is estimated at about 700 and they are dying out rapidly (vide Conzemius, b). The Rama tribe, the bulk of which lives on Rama Key in Bluefields Lagoon, numbers only about 200. Its language is of Chibcha stock and is closely allied to those spoken by the aborigines of Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, and northern Ecuador (vide Conzemius, c). The western portion of the Mosquito Coast was formerly occupied by the *Matagalpa*, whose language has been extinct for nearly half a century; a dialect of it is still spoken to this day in the villages of Cacaopera and Lislique (Salvador). A number of other tribes have been reported from the country under consideration in former days, but as they have been extinct for some time it has been impossible to classify them. Some of the tribal designations applied by the early authors are merely derived from the rivers upon which the tribes lived.

From Rio Tinto northward along the sea and lagoons live the so-called *Black Carib* or *Garif*. These are the descendants of the unfortunate aborigines of St. Vincent, one of the Leeward Islands, whom the British Government deported in 1796 to Ruatan Island in the Bay of Honduras. They have also formed several small settlements at Pearl Lagoon (Nicaragua). The Garif are an offspring of the Carib Indians who inhabited the Lesser Antilles at the time of discovery, and already during the seventeenth century intermarried with runaway Negro slaves. They still speak the language of their ancestors from the West Indies and have retained many original Indian customs. They appear to be increasing in number and are estimated at about 15,000, of whom 3,500 live within the boundaries of the Mosquito Coast; the remainder are found all along the Atlantic shore of Central America as far north as Stann Creek in British Honduras.[1]

Around Bluefields, Pearl Lagoon, San Juan del Norte, and the islands Corn, San Andreas, and Providencia a large share of the inhabitants are so-called "*Creoles.*" These are the descendants of the Negroes and Mulattoes brought as slaves from Jamaica by the English settlers during the eighteenth century. They intermarried with Miskito and Rama Indians and speak the English language. The Creoles practically all belong to the Moravian Church; they are thrifty and law-abiding, very polite, and respectful to strangers, and less noisy and boisterous than the West Indian Negroes who have emigrated to the Mosquito Coast in recent years.

Negroes and *Mulattoes* are found scattered in the country. They are chiefly of English speech and have arrived lately from Jamaica, the Cayman Islands, the Bay Islands, and British Honduras. There may be found also a few "Patois," that is French-speaking Negroes from Haiti, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Santa Lucia, and Dominica, besides some Spanish-speaking Negroes from the interior of Central America or from the coasts of Colombia. The Negro is very strong and robust and endures with ease the moist climate of the coast, but morally he compares very unfavorably with the Creole. He is idle, servile, sensual, weak willed, and content with little; he will not resent bad treatment and injustices are soon forgotten. He loves luxury and extravagance and every species of vain, outer show attracts him.

When the Mosquito Coast was still a British protectorate, that is up to 1860, a very few *Ladinos*, or Spanish-speaking Central Americans, could be found there. Locally they are generally called "Spaniards," but they are largely of Indian extraction with only a very slight admixture of Spanish blood. They arrived chiefly as rubber bleeders and gold seekers, and lately as Government officials. Since the incorporation of the Mosquito Reservation into the Republic of Nicaragua (1894) their number has rapidly increased; they are particularly numerous at Bluefields and at the Pispis mining district, but may be found scattered throughout the country. The Ladinos

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[1] Vide E. Conzemius, Ethnographical Notes on the Black Carib (Garif). American Anthropologist, April–June, 1928, vol. 30, pp. 183–205.

000 are somewhat quarrelsome, especially when they are under the influence of intoxicating drinks, but they are very hospitable and polite to strangers.

The creation of the mining and banana-raising industry has brought to the country an ever-increasing number of *North Americans* and *Europeans*. *Chinese* and *Syrians* are active as shopkeepers.

175 History.—Columbus discovered the country in 1502, during his fourth and last voyage to the New World, when he proceeded along the Atlantic coast of Central America from Trujillo in Honduras to Nombre de Dios in Panama. In the course of the following years several attempts were made by the Spaniards to take possession of the Mosquito Coast, but the natives resisted and were able to maintain their independence. The Spaniards were chiefly in quest of loot, and as the Indians gave them much trouble, and no gold was found in their country, they centered their energies upon the Pacific coast.

Later the English from Jamaica entered into friendly and commercial relations with the Miskito Indians, and gradually established a protectorate over the country. British traders arrived frequently on the coast, and later garrisons were introduced from Jamaica.

In 1786, by virtue of a treaty celebrated with Spain, Great Britain agreed to evacuate the country, and to recognize the sovereignty of the King of Spain over it. But the Spaniards were unable to maintain a foothold there, owing to the hostilities of the Indians worked up by a number of the English settlers who had refused to leave the coast.

Spanish power in America was already on the decline in those days and in 1821 the States of Central America declared their independence. Gradually the English authorities from Jamaica renewed their old friendly relations with the Miskito. The son of one of the principal chiefs was crowned solemnly at Belize (British Honduras) and the protectorate was reestablished.

The Mosquito Kingdom or Kingdom of Mosquitia was claimed in those days by the English to include the whole Atlantic coast of Central America from Chiriqui Lagoon (latitude 9° N.) to Cabo Honduras, that is a coast line of about 700 miles. The western limit was not well defined, but was said to be formed by the first Spanish settlements in the interior. The Corn Islands and the numerous smaller islands and keys, situated off the coast, were also under the jurisdiction of the Mosquito King. The larger islands, Providencia, Santa Catalina, and San Andreas, were administered, however, by the authorities of Nueva Granada (Colombia), although they belong geographically to the Mosquito Coast.

In 1847 the claims of the British were limited to the territory between Cabo Honduras and Rio San Juan, and over this region the King, or rather his British advisers, exercised jurisdiction until 1860. The boundaries between the Mosquito Coast and the Republics of

Honduras and Nicaragua had never been fixed; the two last named never recognized the existence of a Mosquito nation, but their effective jurisdiction did not extend to the east of an irregular line reaching from the eighty-third to the eighty-sixth degree west of Greenwich. 175

In those days the project of an interoceanic canal through the Isthmus of Nicaragua was occupying the principal maritime nations of Europe and the United States as well. The latter country had never viewed with favor the continual encroachments of Great Britain upon Central America. But when the English in 1848 took forceful possession of San Juan del Norte, the Atlantic terminus of the projected canal, the North American Republic openly took sides with Honduras and Nicaragua. Pressure from the United States forced England to sign in 1859 and 1860 treaties with Honduras and Nicaragua, by virtue of which the Mosquito Coast was recognized as part of the two Central American republics.

The part of the country situated between Rio Hueso on the north and Rio Punta Gorda on the south and extending inland to 84° 15′ W., was, however, made into a reservation wherein the aborigines were to be allowed a certain autonomy. At the head of this reservation was the King, whose title was now changed to that of "Chief" (*Jefe*).

Most of the Indians, Miskito as well as Sumu, were not living within the boundaries of this newly created territory. The government of the latter was chiefly in the hands of native English-speaking "Creoles" or Jamaican immigrants. These were strongly opposed to Nicaraguan influence. The authorities of the reservation were constantly at odds with those of Managua, and the sovereignty of the Republic was only nominal. In 1881 some of the arising disputes were submitted for arbitration to the Emperor of Austria. Finally in 1894 Zelaya, President of Nicaragua, forcefully took possession of the Mosquito Reservation and ousted the local authorities; the country was then incorporated in the Republic as the *Departamento de Zelaya* (now *Departamento de Bluefields*).

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SHORT ACCOUNT OF THE ETHNOGRAPHICAL EXPLORATION OF THE MOSQUITO COAST.—Columbus sailed along the Mosquito Coast from north to south in 1502, but he appears not to have come in contact with either Miskito or Sumu. Between the years 1513 and 1529 the versatile historiographer of the Indies, Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo (1478–1557), spent some time on the Pacific coast of Nicaragua. His great work, which was not published completely until 1851–1855, deals, however, almost exclusively with the Nicarao and Chorotega as far as Nicaragua is concerned, and only a few vague statements refer to the "Chontales," a general designation under which the primitive tribes of the Atlantic coast were known in those days. Benzoni, Castañeda, Andagoya, García Palacios, and Motolinia all personally

175 visited Nicaragua or Honduras, but the rude Atlantic tribes were entirely ignored by them, just as they were by the other celebrated 114 chroniclers, Gómara, Herrera, and Torquemada.

A few ethnographical details pertaining to the Indians of Río Patuca (Sumu or Paya) have been left by the Franciscan missionary Espino, who remained in that region from May, 1667, until the beginning of 1668.

The author of the first famous work on the buccaneers, A. O. Exquemelin (name corrupted by the English into Esquemeling and by the French into Oexmelin), who came as an engagé to the West Indies in 1666, visited the Mosquito Coast in 1671 or 1672. He had joined the buccaneers in those days and among them appears to have performed the functions of barber-surgeon. In this capacity he accompanied Morgan on his famous raid on Panama in 1671. From the latter place his vessel sailed northward along the Atlantic shore of Central America, stopping at Bluefields Lagoon where the buccaneers were attacked by Sumu Indians. The vessel then stopped for some time at Cabo Gracias. Exquemelin's work was published in Dutch in Amsterdam in 1678. It was translated in German (1679), Spanish (1681), English (1684), and French (1686). Numerous editions have appeared since in many languages, and the book forms the basis of practically all the popular accounts of the seventeenth century buccaneer captains. The translations have appeared with serious additions, omissions, and alterations, each translator having been endeavoring to present his own country in the most advantageous light. The French translations especially contain additions of other French buccaneers not mentioned in the Dutch original, while the English editions glorify particularly the sack of Panama by Morgan. Exquemelin's work gives some very interesting accounts regarding the Miskito of Cabo Gracias a Dios.

The famous English navigator, William Dampier, who was born in 1652 as the son of a Somersetshire farmer, sailed to the West Indies in his youth. From 1675 to 1678 he was active as logwood cutter in Campeche and in 1680 he joined the buccaneers. In later years Dampier became very celebrated. On board a buccaneer vessel he visited Bluefields Lagoon and the Corn Islands, which enabled him to give us a few ethnographical details regarding the aborigines (Sumu) of those parts and the Miskito of Cabo Gracias a Dios. Dampier's great work, A New Voyage Round the World, which appeared in London in 1697, had a tremendous success and within a few years a great number of editions appeared in English, French, German, Dutch, and other languages.

The Parisian buccaneer, Raveneau de Lussan, a well-educated nobleman, who joined the buccaneers at Santo Domingo in 1684, is the author of a book (Journal du Voyage, etc., Paris, 1689) on the exploits

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932

SA15 Mosquito SA15

of the French and English adventurers in the Pacific Ocean from March, 1685, to December, 1687. Being pursued by superior Spanish forces, these buccaneers abandoned their vessel in the Gulf of Fonseca and walked to the upper course of Rio Coco, down which they descended in rafts to the Miskito settlements around Cabo Gracias a Dios. 175 114

The great naturalist, Sir Hans Sloane, has also left us a few details pertaining to the Miskito whom he had met in Jamaica. On the arrival of each new governor of that island the Miskito King came over to Jamaica with a number of his men, as he had a commission from the governor. Sloane had thus occasion to meet these Indians in 1688 and again in 1725.

But the most detailed account of the aborigines of the Mosquito Coast, written in early days, is that of an Englishman, probably a former buccaneer, who signs merely "M. W." (The Mosqueto Indian and His Golden River). He had an intimate knowledge of the Miskito and also gives some details pertaining to the Sumu.

Over 100 years passed until another careful observer has left us an account of the Indian tribes under consideration. Orlando W. Roberts was active as a trader on the eastern coast of Central America from the Gulf of Darien to the Bay of Honduras (1816–1823). He refers chiefly to the tribe of the Miskito.

During the years 1839 to 1842 Thomas Young was living around Rio Tinto. He was deputy superintendent of the British Central America Land Co., which was endeavoring to colonize that part of the Mosquito Coast. Young had an intimate knowledge of the various tribes of Indians as they really were in those days.

From June to August, 1844, a commission of three Germans (Messrs. Fellechner, Müller and Hesse) was looking over the coastal region of Honduras between Cabo Gracias a Dios and Rio Patuca in order to determine the advisability of establishing a German colony there.

Another German, Julius Fröbel, who was compelled to leave his native country as a result of the political events of 1848, spent some time in 1850 and 1851 around the great lake region of Nicaragua and on the upper Rio Escondido among the Ulwa Indians.

For much valuable information pertaining to the Miskito and Sumu we are indebted to three Englishmen who came to the country in the following years. The most important one among them is Charles Bell, who lived in the country during his youth, from 1846 to 1862, his father being attached to the government of the "Kingdom." He had a very intimate knowledge of that part of the country situated to the south of Rio Coco. Between 1863 and 1868 John Collinson, a civil engineer, made two voyages to the Mosquito Coast, being employed by Commander Pim to survey from Lake Nicaragua

175 to Punta Gorda for a proposed railway. The naturalist H. A. Wickham lived in Nicaragua (Rio Escondido and Pearl Lagoon) from 114 October, 1867, to June, 1868, in order to collect birds. His ethnographical notes pertaining to the Ulwa are of great interest.

A few years later the French mining engineer, Paul Lévy, traveled on the Mosquito Coast to carry on researches for the Government of Nicaragua. Among the minor contributors to the ethnology of the Mosquito Coast of the nineteenth century are the following: Bovallius, the Swedish zoologist (1881–1883); K. von Girsewald (1892), who spent six months in the gold regions of Pispis; Bruno Mierisch, the government engineer of Nicaragua, who explored the gold regions between Rio Coco and Rio Grande in 1892 and 1893.

In 1900 the celebrated German traveler, Dr. Karl Sapper, who is intimately acquainted with Central America, visited the Miskito and the Sumu living on and about Rio Bocay. The ethnographical specimens collected by him are in the Stuttgart Museum. A collection of ethnographical and archeological material obtained by Doctor Neuhaus around Rio Escondido about this same period is in the Museum für Völkerkunde (Berlin). The German linguist, Walter Lehmann, also investigated these tribes in the course of his voyage to Central America (1907–1909), but unfortunately the ethnographical part of his studies has not yet appeared. The Honduran schoolteacher, Francisco Martinez, also collected interesting ethnological data during his stay at the Sumu village Guampú on Rio Patuca (1916–17). Unfortunately his various contributions have all appeared in local newspapers and reviews of very difficult access.

Finally mention must also be made of the work done by several Moravian missionaries, especially Heath, Grossmann, Reichel, Martin, Ziock, and Sieborger. The books by Schneider and Brindeau are based nearly exclusively upon the investigations of these missionaries.

Since the war the work has been continued by Americans. H. J. Spinden visited Rio Coco and the coast of Nicaragua in 1917–18, and the coast of Honduras in 1923. Dr. A. H. Schultz, of the Johns Hopkins Medical School, carried on some anthropological studies on the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua, examining 25 Rama and 12 Sumu Indians. During the same year (1924) D. E. Harrower, of the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, was collecting ethnological specimens during two months among the Miskito, Sumu, and Rama.

GENERAL REMARKS ON THE MISKITO

161 The Miskito are estimated at about 15,000, which number exceeds that of all the other Indian tribes of the Mosquito Coast combined. 144 They are largely mixed with Negroes, for which reason the Spaniards have called them "Zambos," meaning Negro and Indian half-breed, a name which is appropriate.

The Miskito readily intermarry with foreigners. They assimilate 144
all races; the children always speak the language of the mother and 191
grow up as Miskito, whether the father be "Creole," "Ladino," Carib, Negro, Sumu, Rama, Paya, North American, European, Syrian, or Chinaman. The villages between Wounta and Rio Hueso show this phenomenon to perfection. (Heath, a: 50.) Consequently [161]
the pure Indian tribes, as the Sumu, Paya, and Rama, are rapidly diminishing in numbers, whereas the Miskito, owing to the influx of fresh blood, are holding their own.

In spite of the fact that the Miskito have been since the seventeenth 177
century in contact with buccaneers, British traders, and settlers, mahogany cutters, rubber bleeders, and Moravian missionaries, they 101
have not changed considerably in their mode of life. Their tribal name appears first in the works of the piratical sea rovers, the English calling them generally "Moskite" and "Moskito," and the French "Moustique" and "Moustiquais."

Exquemelin (Engl. ed.: 250; French ed.: II, 264–265) calculates 101
the number of the Miskito at about 1,500 to 1,700, including 200 161
Negro slaves. In those days they were divided into two subtribes
having but little relation with each other. One of them lived at 131
Cabo Gracias a Dios, the other at Moustique (=Sandy Bay?). The Indians from this latter place occasionally accompanied the buccaneer vessels, the others being less courageous on the sea. Dampier states, however, that the whole tribes comprised less than 100 men (Dampier: I, 7). Raveneau de Lussan (437–438), who writes about the same time, says that the Miskito of Cabo Gracias a Dios and lower Rio Coco were largely mixed with Negroes, while those at Sandy Bay were still pure Indians. In 1699 the Miskito occupied the seacoast from Cabo Camarón in Honduras to about 57 miles south of Brangmans River (=Wawa River?), where the territory of the Sumu began. The coast line of their territory had an extension of about 285 miles; they had, besides, two settlements on the lower Rio Coco (M. W.: 299). From the details given by the latter author the total population of this tribe numbered close to 1,000. In 1725 the Miskito numbered about 2,000 men altogether and were ruled by three chiefs (Lade). Bell (a: 250), who lived many years in the country, estimated the total Indian population of that territory at about 10,000 to 15,000, of which the Miskito numbered nearly one-half. The present writer calculates the total number of this tribe at about 15,000, of which at least one-third live on both banks of Rio Coco as far up as Rio Bocay, that is, 275 to 300 miles from the sea. In the Republic of Honduras, from Rio Coco to Rio Tinto, may be found from 3,000 to 4,000 Miskito, who inhabit the seashore and lagoons as well as the lower Rio Patuca. The remainder of this tribe lives in Nicaragua, from Rio Coco to Pearl Lagoon.

197 In spite of the distribution of the Miskito over so vast a territory, the dialectical variations of their language are comparatively insignificant. Five dialects have been observed by the writer (vide [144] Conzemius, d: 59–64). A small part of the Miskito has kept aloof from admixture with the Negro; these are called *Tãwira* "Heavy-haired."[2] Lehmann (c: I, 105, 107, 464) attempts to connect the ancient Chuchures of Panama with the Miskito, but this theory is barely acceptable. These Chuchures are said to have arrived in canoes from Honduras, and they settled in the neighborhood of Nombre de Dios. But their number gradually declined owing to disease and they finally disappeared altogether.

192 Many corrupted English words have passed into the speech of the Miskito, while words borrowed from Spanish are much less common. In certain regions, especially on the upper Rio Coco, a large number of Sumu words have been incorporated in the language.

GENERAL REMARKS ON THE SUMU

101 161 Inland from the Miskito, from Rio Patuca to Rio Punta Gorda, live the more primitive Sumu, who speak a related language. They inhabit chiefly the headwaters of the larger rivers or the affluents thereof. Owing to close intermarriage and lack of hygienic living conditions they are rapidly diminishing in numbers, and the day of their complete disappearance or absorption by the Miskito does not seem far off. Their total number is estimated at about 3,000 to 3,500.

101 197 The Sumu are split into different subtribes speaking various dialects which are almost mutually intelligible. These are known by the names *Twahka*, *Ulwa*, *Panamaka*, *Bawihka*, and *Kukra* (vide Conzemius, d: 64–73). The three first named of these subtribes number about 1,000 each, the Bawihka not more than 150, while the Kukra are practically extinct.

101 131 The Twahka inhabit the northern section of the Sumu territory and are found on the rivers Patuca (Guampû), Coco (Lakus and lower Waspuk), Wawa and Kukallaya. The Panamaka live on Rio Coco (Bocay and upper Waspuk) and on Rio Prinsapolca, while

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[2] For the pronunciation of the Indian words the following phonetic system has been used:

a, *e*, *i*, *o*, *u*, correspond to the sounds of these vowels in German or Spanish.
ai as *ai* in "aisle."
au as *ow* in "how."
oi as *oi* in "boil."
ñ as *ng* in "sing."
x as Spanish *j* or German *ch* in "ach" or Scotch *ch* in "loch."
y is always a consonant.
Nasalization of vowels is indicated by the tilde (~) as in Portuguese.
All the other letters have approximately the same value as in English.

the Ulwa inhabit the southern section of the territory in consideration, from Rio Grande to Rio Punta Gorda. 101 131

The Bawihka are limited to Rio Banbana, a large northern affluent of the lower Prinsapolca. The Miskito call them generally *Sumu-sirpi* "small Sumu" or by the misleading name *Twahka*, but among all the Sumu they are known as "Bawihka." This latter name is not mentioned by Lehmann, the latest investigator into the languages of Central America. The Bawihka were formerly also found on the Wawa and Kukallaya, but they were expelled from these regions by the Twahka, and then settled on Rio Banbana. Most of them are living at the village Wasakin (*was-sa-kiš*), "Rocks of the black water."

The Kukra formerly occupied the coast and shores of the lagoons from Rio Grande to the southern extremity of Bluefields Lagoon. They have always refused all intercourse with the Miskito and the foreigners, but occasionally communicated with the neighboring Ulwa for trading purposes. Toward the middle of the nineteenth century some rubber cutters ventured into their territory, and at Kukra Hill, northwest of Bluefields, they captured a few Indians who wore nothing but a loincloth of white tunu and a collar of shells and animal teeth. They were taken to Bluefields, but died soon afterwards. After this incursion into their country the remaining Indians went inland to the Rio Siquia, where they apparently became absorbed by their kindred, the Ulwa. At Pearl Lagoon may be met a few Miskito who are mixed with Kukra.

Other Sumu subtribes, which are already extinct now, are the *Yusku* (*Yosko*), *Prinsu*, *Boa*, *Silam*, and *Ku*. The Yusku lived on the rivers Tuma and Bocay; they are said to have been very bad and were exterminated by the other Sumu in the course of prolonged wars. The Prinsu lived on Rio Prinsapolca, which owes its name to them. They intermarried with the Miskito and the offspring became known as *Tuñla* or *Tongula* who formed a separate tribe speaking a corrupted Miskito but retained many Sumu customs. The Boa lived on the headwaters of Rio Grande, while the Silam and Ku lived along the Waspuk River.

The Spanish historians of the sixteenth century included the Sumu under the general term "Chontal" or "Chondal," a Mexican word which means merely "stranger," "foreigner," and was applied by the Nahuatl to any primitive tribe. In later documents the Sumu are mentioned as "Caribes," "Chatos," "Albatuinas" (from the Miskito *Albawina*) and by a number of other names. To-day the whole group is generally known by the Miskito designations "Sumu" or "Smu," which have already been used by Bell and Wickham. Some writers have mentioned the whole group under the names Twahka and Ulwa, which, properly speaking, should be 101

101 restricted to two subtribes thereof. Lehmann's classification of the Sumu tribes is likewise unsatisfactory. With the word "Sumu" we have a convenient name for the whole of these various dialects; its use will avoid the sad confusion met with still in the recent literature.

191 All the male Sumu either know Miskito or Spanish (or even both), depending upon their proximity to Miskito or Ladino settlements. A few of them know a little English. Hardly any of the women are, however, able to speak a foreign tongue. Through Miskito many 192 corrupted English words have passed into their speech, while words borrowed from Spanish are not so common.

RELATIONSHIP OF THE MISKITO AND SUMU

173 The relationship of the Miskito with the Sumu has already been established from linguistic evidence (Lehmann, b: 714–720) and is reenforced by a survey of the ethnology of the two tribes. In this connection the following Sumu tradition, which points toward a common origin, will be interesting. It was recorded in 1904 at *Alami-kañban* (Rio Prinsapolca) from a Sumu named Frederick, by the Rev. G. R. Heath, a Moravian missionary, who resided many years on the Mosquito Coast. The latter communicated it to Lehmann, who published it in 1910 (b: 717–718). This version was later reproduced by Joyce (9–10) and by Alexander (185–186):

> At Kaunapa Hill, on the left bank of Rio Patuca, a few miles below the mouth of Rio Guampú, there is a rock bearing the sign of a human umbilical cord, and from which were born the tribal ancestors, a Great Father (*Mái-sahana* "he who begot us")[3] and a Great Mother (*Itwana* or *Itoki*).[4] The Miskito and the Sumu are the descendants of these two primal ancestors.
>
> The first born were the Miskito who, disobedient and headstrong, as they are still to-day, cared little for the instructions of their ancestors and ran away to the seacoast.
>
> Then the Twahka or Tawahka were born, who consider themselves to this day the nobility among the Sumu.[5]
>
> Then followed the Yusku, who turned to evil ways; for that reason the other tribes made war upon them and almost exterminated them.
>
> The youngest, the Ulwa, being according to the Indian custom the favorites, profited to such an extent by the instructions of the tribal ancestors that they became especially skilled in the secrets of medicine and incantation and won the name of *Boa*, "enchanters."[6]

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[3] *Wan-bâikan* in the Miskito language.

[4] *Yapti-misri*, "Mother Scorpion," or *Yapti-tara*, "Great Mother," in the language of the Miskito.

[5] In Miskito the word *tawakya* means, however, "firstborn" and the parents thus call their first child.

[6] Lehmann (b: 717) says erroneously "Singers," and this error is copied by Joyce (10) and Alexander (185–186). According to my own informants the Boa were a subtribe of the Sumu differing from the Ulwa.

> Meanwhile the Twahka lived in the bush. They were wild and unkempt; 173 their hair fell to their knees and they were full of lice. Finally the King of the Miskito sent for them and captured them; he had them washed and altogether regenerated them, so that he won their love and obtained their support.[7]

The language of the Miskito is closely allied to that of the Sumu, 197 but it also contains many foreign words. It is very probable that the Miskito were originally a subtribe of the Sumu, and that they have 101 become greatly modified in the course of the centuries through inter- 144 marriage with Negroes, Europeans, and other Indian tribes. Already in 1875, at a time when the relationship of the Miskito and Sumu languages was still unknown, Zúñiga Echenique (209) considered the Miskito as the offspring of fugitive slaves with Twahka women. Of the various Sumu subtribes still existing, the Bawihka is the one which linguistically and ethnographically presents the greatest affinity to the Miskito. The Bawihka formerly occupied the region immediately adjoining the coast line where the Miskito were met with by the first Europeans during the latter part of the seventeenth century. These facts induce me to believe that the hybrid tribe of the Miskito owes its origin to the intermarriage of the Bawihka with the Negroes escaped from the slave ship which was wrecked to the south of Cabo Gracias a Dios in 1641.

These Africans arrived on a Portuguese slave ship captained by 144 Lourenço Gramalxo. The vessel had taken its black cargo on board while anchoring at the Guinea Coast, and then headed for Brazil. While on the high seas the Negroes revolted and made themselves masters of the ship. Not knowing anything about the art of navigation they allowed their vessel to be carried by the trade wind and ocean currents toward the coast of Central America, where it became wrecked on the Mosquito Keys, situated a little south of Cabo Gracias a Dios. The Negroes, who were able to reach the mainland, [567] were captured by the Indians and reduced to slavery. They were, however, allowed to intermarry with their masters, and their children grew up as free members of the tribe. (Vide Peralta, b: 57–58, 121; Exquemelin, French ed.: II, 276–277; Edwards: V, 210; M. W.: 303, 307.)

Henderson (216) states, however, that these Africans proceeded from the Samba country in West Africa and that their vessel was Dutch. This is repeated by Roberts (153), Young (71–72) and De Kalb (27). The last named author further specifies that the vessel in question was wrecked in 1650 and that the Africans proceeded from Samba Island at the mouth of the Cassiri River in Senegambia. Bell (b: 3) likewise considered the vessel as Dutch and says that it was wrecked near Dakuna at the beginning of the eighteenth century. This date is, however, incorrect.

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[7] The addition regarding the Miskito King is of recent date. No mention is made of the other Sumu subtribes, as the Panamaka, Bawihka, or Kukra.

144 On the other hand, Santaella Melgarejo, in a report dated Guatemala, April 3, 1715 (Peralta, b: 78–80), states that the vessel in question was English and that it was wrecked in 1652 on the Cajones or Tiburones Keys to the east of Cabo Gracias a Dios. Fearing the Indians from the mainland, the Negroes settled at first at some keys south of the mentioned Cajones (undoubtedly the Mosquito Keys), and once friendly relations were established with the natives, they established themselves at Cabo Gracias a Dios.

Again it is said that the vessel in question was Spanish and bound for Cuba (Raveneau de Lussan: 437–438; Heath, a: 51).

Our source material pertaining to the origin of these slaves is therefore very meager and contradictory. According to a report of Fray Benito Garret y Arlové, dated November 30, 1711 (Peralta, b: 57), one of these Africans, an old man named Juan Ramón, who lived in Granada (Nicaragua) related that about one-third of his countrymen were captured by the Indians and reduced to slavery. The others took to the bush, whence they carried on a crude warfare with the aborigines, who were finally compelled to retreat toward the interior. About 1672 the number of these African slaves held by the Miskito was estimated at about 200; in those days they had already adopted the language and customs of the Indians (Exquemelin, Fr. ed.: II, 276–277).

As a result of the above, the Miskito from Cabo Gracias a Dios to Sandy Bay had already a large admixture of African blood toward the end of the seventeenth century. In the course of time refugee slaves from the English settlements and more recent immigration of Negroes and Mulattoes (chiefly from the West Indies) have contributed to the spreading of the African type, so that to-day Negro characteristics may be observed in almost every village. One of the subtribes of the Miskito, the *Tāwira* who live a short distance inland, from Sandy Bay to Wawa River, however, have refused to mingle their blood with that of the Africans. It is only in recent years that they have begun to intermarry with the mixed Miskito, especially with newcomers from Rio Coco, so that soon a Miskito of pure Indian blood will be a thing of the past.

197 We do not know to what extent these African slaves have influenced the original language of the Miskito, for such researches would entail exhaustive comparative studies with the surrounding Indian languages (Sumu, Paya, Rama), with the Creole dialects of the West Indies, and the languages of the Guinea Coast. The vowel scale is exactly the same as in the Jamaican Creole dialect; several of the peculiar phrases of everyday life are found literally translated into English in Jamaica (Heath, a: 51).

173 We are also indebted to Mr. Heath for a Miskito migration legend which is said to have been given out as authentic by Eduardo Pereira,

a descendant of the Miskito royal family.[8] (Heath, a: 49; Lehmann, 173
b: 715–716; Joyce: 8–9.) The present writer has, however, little faith in its exactitude, and such is also the opinion of the various older Indians he consulted about it.[9]

In former days the Miskito were called Kiribi[10] and lived on the narrow isthmus between Lake Nicaragua and the Pacific Ocean, a territory which the Nicarao occupied at the arrival of the Spaniards.

Late in the tenth century this country was invaded by a tribe of immigrants from the north (probably the Nicarao) and eventually, after a long struggle, the Miskito were compelled to leave their old home and retreat to the eastern shore of Lake Nicaragua. Here they resided for nearly a century, but finally, again under foreign pressure, this time exercised probably by the Sumu or Matagalpa, they migrated to the Atlantic shore. Believing that they had now found a safe home, they gave themselves the name of *Dis-kituras-sani*, "they who can not be dislodged," which was corrupted into Miskito.

At the time of their migration to the Atlantic their leader was a sort of culture hero, named *Wakna*, whose son *Lakpatara* "Evening Star" conquered the whole coast from Honduras to Costa Rica. While Wakna was still alive disputes arose among the Miskito chiefs. A rebellion, headed by *Wialandis*,[11] was defeated; its leader was imprisoned, and 300 of his partisans were executed.

PHYSIQUE: PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

General.—The Sumu differ naturally in many points in physique 141
from the Negro-mixed Miskito, but there are also certain slight dissimilarities between them and the pure Miskito or *Tāwira*. The latter are, as a rule, well built and of middle height, whereas the Sumu are rather thickset and low in stature. According to Schultz (67) the Sumu from Rio Prinsapolca measure from 1.427 m. to 1.68 m. with 1.5816 m. as an average.[12]

Both tribes are sturdy, heavy muscled, proportionally broad 142
shouldered, and have deep chests. The arms are well developed in comparison to the legs. As both of these tribes are essentially canoe men, passing most of their time in a cramped position in small boats, they lack the well-developed leg muscles of the "civilized" Indians of the interior.

Color.—The Sumu are of fairer complexion than all the other Indian tribes of this part of Central America, not excluding the so-called pure Miskito or Tāwira.

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[8] The father of Mr. Pereira was a Mexican; his mother was the daughter of a Scotchman named Haly and an Indian woman of the Miskito royal family.

[9] Pereira, besides, denies having given out this version, and claims to be in possession of the correct account.

[10] This name has an alluring similarity to Corobici, under which name the early Spanish historians of Central America mention an Indian tribe which lived formerly in northwestern Costa Rica to the south of Lake Nicaragua.

[11] Compare walis "enemy" in the Miskito language.

[12] The anthropological measurements by Schultz, quoted in this study, were taken on 13 Sumu from Rio Prinsapolca and 25 Rama from Rama Key, all males.

142 **Sacral pigment spot.**—The "Oriental mark" (Mongolen-Fleck) is met with among all these tribes during early infancy. It consists of a bluish-gray spot found in the sacral region, which gradually disappears in adult life. The Indians pay no attention to it and most of them do not even know of its existence.

141 **Cephalic index.**—The Sumu are on the average hyperbrachycephalic, that is, they have exceedingly broad heads. The cephalic index, which is obtained by dividing the breadth of the head by its length and multiplying the result by 100, was found to be 89.48 according to Schultz (71–72). This high figure is surpassed by few [304] American tribes.[12] It may be the result of artificial deformation, since this practice was formerly current among the Sumu.

Morphological face index.—The Sumu are on the average mesoprosopic, that is, they have proportionally narrow faces; Schultz (72) found a face index of 84.82 among this tribe living on Rio Prinsapolca, while among the Rama the figure was higher (85.20).

Nose.—The nose of both Miskito and Sumu is relatively large; the profile is slightly convex among most of pure-blooded Indians. The nasal index is, on the average, very low among the Sumu, the range of variation extending from 66.0 to 83.3, with 73.76 as an average (Schultz: 74). This tribe is therefore mesorrhinic; the Rama, however, have even a narrower nose and are classed as leptorrhinic, the index ranging from 57.6 to 75.9 with an average of 65.96, a rather unusually low figure for American Indians.

Ears.—The Indians of the Mosquito Coast have relatively narrow ears, the physiognomic ear index averaging 54.09 among the Sumu; those of the Rama are still narrower with an average ear index of only 52.64 (Schultz: 75).

142 **Eyes.**—The large brilliant eyes are so dark brown that they appear black to the casual observer. In both Miskito and Sumu they are horizontal, but those of their northern neighbors, the Paya, have a slight Mongoloid tilt.

Lips and chin.—The lips are full, but not thick, among the Sumu and the pure-blooded Miskito, while the chin is generally "receding"; a prominent chin occurs rarely.

Hands and feet.—The hands are small as compared with Whites and Negroes. In most individuals the annularis is slightly longer than the index finger; the reverse is apparently never the case. The little finger is relatively very small and stands inside of the direction of the ulnar edge of the palm, as if it had been crowded toward the fourth finger. The smallness and position of this finger is not an inherited racial character, but the direct result of the narrow paddle

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[12] Boas, quoted by R. Martin (Lehrbuch der Anthropologie, Jena, 1914) found an average cephalic index in Wichita Indians (Oklahoma) of both sexes of 89.5 and one of 89.7 in male California Indians.

handles.[14] These conditions are not yet apparent on the hands of 142
children.

HAIR.—All these Indians have an abundance of hair growth extending very low over the forehead, but it is very scarce on the other parts of the body. The hair is usually black, and very straight and coarse, but occasionally hair with very long low waves may be met with among the pure Indians. Gray and white hair occurs sometimes but not by far as frequently as among the white race. Baldness is practically unknown. Beard growth is very scarce, while chest hair is totally absent among the pure Indians.

LONGEVITY.—There are no reliable figures to be obtained regarding 165
the age of the older Indians. Very few of them seem to have passed their sixtieth or seventieth birthday; still during the years 1917–1922 the writer met a number of Indians who were about 4 to 6 years old at the great eruption of the volcano Coseguina on the Bay of Fonseca [731]
in 1835. This catastrophe, which was accompanied by great earthquakes, is still spoken of by these Indians as the "Great Darkness" (M.: *tihmya-tara;* S.: *puk-sani, puk-barak*);[15] a thick rain of ashes poured over the coast at the time and the sun was as invisible as at night.

DEFORMITIES.—In former days deformed children were not allowed 732
to grow up; they were either buried alive or left to starve. This 847
accounts for the rare cases of deformities encountered among these Indians. Only the strong and healthy being allowed to grow up and produce children, there is little variety of physical and mental development. Even were such a deformed child allowed to grow up, it would not easily find a mate and would die without leaving any children behind. In civilized countries deformities are propagated, as such people will find someone to marry them if they have fortune.

If an Indian has some deformed limb, either brought with it into the 732
world or the result of an accident, he will secrete it as much as possible from the sight of other people, as such is considered a great disgrace. It would be an insult to ask him to show it or to even refer to it.[16] In case of a dispute among Indians one will immediately pick out the weak points in the personal appearance of his adversary.

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[14] See the illustration given by Schultz (69).

[15] The abbreviations for the tribal names used in the present study are the following: M.=Miskito; S.=Sumu; T.=Twahka; P.=Panamaka; U.=Ulwa.

[16] At the Sansan village on Rio Coco the writer knew a Miskito who had lost several fingers on one hand through an accident at the gold mines of Pispis; from that time on he always carried a bandage around the mutilated hand. In the same village a young boy, having lost several toes, was continually wearing a shoe on that foot, although the other foot was always bare.

CLOTHING

291 **Men.**—The loin cloth, breechcloth, or waistcloth (M.: *palpura;*[17]
T., P.: *wah;* U.: *ani*) was formerly the only article of dress worn by
men on ordinary occasions. It consists of a long, narrow strip of
bark cloth, 8 to 9 feet long and 12 to 15 inches wide, which is wrapped
several times around the loins, while the ends are left to hang down
in front and behind. Occasionally it was made from cotton, and
ornamented with colored patterns. The loin cloth has now practically
disappeared among the Miskito, being worn only by boys, but it
is still in use among the grown-up Sumu. Now all the men from
[177] both tribes own loose cotton shirts (M.: *prak;* S.: *parak;* from the
English "frock") and trousers (M.: *tr͡ausis*, from the English; T.,
P.: *kal-anin;* U.: *kalson*, from the Spanish "calzón") with the tails
generally not tucked in. They make these articles themselves
[434] from imported cloth or they obtain the finished garment by way of
trade. Formerly the Sumu used a sort of shirt or poncho, consisting
[287] merely of a sheet of tree bark with a hole in the middle for the head;
it was tied under each arm with a piece [illegible] fiber. This primitive
garment was called *kahl͡au* or *kahlo* by the [illegible] its Miskito name is
unknown. When the Indian is in the op[illegible]e approach of rain
he pulls his shirt off and covers it up wit[illegible] *Heliconia* or *Musa*
leaves in order to prevent it from getting wet.

Women.—The only garment worn by the more primitive women
of both tribes is a wrapper (M.: *kwaluntara;* T.: *ipnapan;* P.: *ipnapani,
asna-pani, amat-pani;* U.: *asna-pahka*), a piece of cloth, 2½ to 3 yards
in length, which is wrapped about the hips and extends from the waist,
where it is fastened by tucking in one end, down to the knees. Nowadays
[439] it is made of imported bright-colored cloth, but formerly the
common tunu bark cloth was used for this purpose. The upper
[287] part of the body was entirely naked in former days, but now the
women wear a sleeveless garment of imported cotton goods, which is
cut very open and is known by the English name *prak* (= "frock")
among the Miskito; the Sumu call it *kahl͡au* (T., P.) or *kahlo* (U.).
Little girls wear a sort of loin cloth, as do the boys, but with broad
end pieces which look like small aprons in front and behind; this
garment is called *nika* by the Miskito and *tat͡ai* by the Sumu.

292 **Dress of the chiefs.**—Men of rank wore, besides the loin cloth, a
sleeveless cotton tunic (M.: *wipal;*[18] S.: *kiñkura*) which hung down
to the knees; it was beautifully embroidered with the down of the
[531] muscovy duck and dyed by means of vegetable juices. A girdle,
sash or belt (M.: *yalasawa;* S.: *bamak-sitna*) of the same material was
tied around the waist over this sort of mantle; it was about 6 feet
long and 6 inches wide.

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[17] This name is mentioned in 1699 under the form *purproy* (M. W.: 307, 308).

[18] Compare the word "huipil" in Mexican-Spanish.

Festival dress (Miskito).—M. W. (308) gives us a description of 292
the gala dress of the Miskito which was worn on festal occasions.
Besides the loin cloth the men wore cotton bands with bright feathers
attached around their wrists and above and below the knees. The 302
body, or the face only, was painted with pinewood charcoal, over
which a "varnish" of turpentine was applied. On the breast was a 301
thin plate made of a Spanish dollar piece beaten out flat, the successor
of the gold plate met on this coast and in Costa Rica and Panama
at the time of Columbus. Between the shoulders was suspended
a tube made from a shin bone, with a bunch of feathers, while sea shells
depended from the ears. A rod of bone or cane was worn at the
pierced septum of the nose; a turtle hook, inserted in a perforation
of the lower lip, supported a pendent plate of brass or shell.

Nowadays the Miskito wear on feast days old coats which they 292
have obtained from the foreign residents. The bright-colored 171
necktie, worn sometimes without any collar, is then allowed to fall
over the coat. The socks, which are not worn on ordinary occasions,
are pulled over the trousers like overboots. Bright-colored handkerchiefs
(*añksar*) are also in great favor.

Festival dress (Sumu).—At their festivals the Sumu of to-day 292
paint the entire body red and black, so that it is impossible for them
to recognize each other. At such an occasion their only clothing consists of a loin cloth and a headdress (*sira*). The latter is made from the split stem of a kind of bamboo, known locally by the Miskito name *bratara*, from which the bark has been taken off. The different slices are painted and then tied together with black cotton thread, and the cap thus formed is ornamented with the feathers from gaily colored birds, as parrots, macaws, and toucans, or the curly head feathers of the curassow. From this headgear depends a piece of "white tunu" or tree-bark cloth; this part of the cap is called *pakna*. It is painted with various designs, and hangs down the back to the hips. On the neck, wrist, and knee they wear, besides, strings of beads worked into designs; round the upper part of the arm they tie a cotton string to which small feathers have been attached.

Headgear.—Many Indians buy hats which are known by the Spanish name "sombrero" (*sumruru, sumuru*) or the English "straw hat" (*trahat, tarahat*). They are little used in their daily occupations and constitute above all an article of ornament. To the women the hat is, however, unknown, nor is there any other sort of headgear used by them.

Footgear.—Sandals are not known in the region under considera- 291
tion, but they are used by the Paya. Moccasins are made occasionally by the Miskito, and shoes are bought in the local shops, but there are no native names for these articles. The women do not use any footgear at all except in the more advanced communities.

291 **Prudery.**—The sentiment of prudery is natural with these people. Few of them will submit to medical examination and on that account there are few Indians working at the gold mines of Pispis, where every applicant for work is obliged to pass such an examination.

Dressmaking.—All the various garments were made formerly
294 from tree bark or cotton. Raveneau de Lussan (439) states, however, that the Miskito made also clothing and blankets from a grayish
[824] stuff which they obtained from the bastard palm (cabbage palm?).
The clothes (M.: *kwala;* S.: *asna*) from imported cotton goods are generally made by the men. Hand sewing machines may be met
[439] with in many huts. Needles (M.: *silak;* T., P.: *silip;* U.: *akusa,* from the Spanish "aguja") are bought in the local shops. The washing
296 of the clothes is, however, the work of the women, who beat them at the river banks with wooden clubs (*tamtam*); the leaves and the fruits
[824] of a small tree (*Sapindus saponaria* L.; M. & S.: *sniwawa*) are used as soap.

BODILY ORNAMENTATION AND DECORATION

302 **Body painting.**—Black and red paint is still applied as an ornament, but more frequently the object is to protect the skin from the sting of certain insects, from the rays of the tropical sun, and even the cold. Perhaps originally this was also done in order to scare the enemy at a battle, for the body was painted in a very hideous manner when an armed expedition was being organized. The paint replaces to some extent the Indian's clothing. The black color is made use of by the men and the red by the women, just as was already the custom among the Miskito during the latter half of the seventeenth century (Exquemelin, Engl. ed.: 252).

The reddish pigment, which may vary from yellow to brown, is
386 obtained from the seeds of a shrub or small tree, called annatto
824 (arnotto) and faroah in the British colonies of tropical America, and "achote" or "achiote" by the Spaniards; the Dutch in Surinam call it "orlean," while the French have given it the name "rocou," from *ruku* or *uruku,* used by certain Indian tribes of Brazil and the Guianas. Its botanical name is *Bixa orellana* L.; the word *Bixa* is derived from the ancient language of Haiti.

The seeds are gathered as soon as the capsules split open, and put in boiling water to remove the testa, or waxy substance, surrounding them. This red waxy coloring matter is then passed through a sieve and made to coagulate with the aid of the leaves of the *tiswat* tree or the seeds from the "ojo de buey" (*Mucuna* sp.; M.: *kwakwa;* S.: *wabala*). It is kept in small calabashes or bottles, which may be seen depending from the rafters of the Indian hut. Before use the
302 pigment is tempered with native vegetable oils. It is applied by

the women with the aid of small wooden sticks (M.: *aulala-dusa;* S.: *awal-panan*) across nose, cheeks, chin, and forehead, in lines, dots, and dashes; sometimes geometrical designs are made. This manner of applying the pigment is by no means hideous; the legs are occasionally painted to match the color of the dress. 302

The black paint is used by the men. The Sumu obtain it chiefly from the melted gum of certain trees, as rubber (*Castilla* sp.), cortés, or *auka* (*Tecoma* sp.), or "tunu," whereas the Miskito use pinewood soot (M.: *alami;* S.: *dam*). Over the latter the Miskito apply a "varnish" of turpentine (M.: *auas-maka;* S.: *auas-ya*), which habit was practiced already toward the end of the seventeenth century (M. W.: 308). The men generally smear the whole of the exposed body parts and never make use of the pretty designs obtained by the women with annatto dye.[19] 386 824 302

Sometimes clays are also used as pigments. In former days it was the work of the woman to paint and anoint her husband every morning previous to his departure for the chase. Now everyone does his own painting and decorating; small looking-glasses for that purpose are in every household. The latter are known by their English name among the Miskito, whereas the Sumu call them *waya-tal* "to see the likeness." [416]

TATTOO.—The embellishment of the countenance with tattoo (M.: *rami;* S.: *tiñ-pana, rami*) is still common among both tribes. The incisions into the flesh were formerly made with the thorns of certain bromeliaceous plants, flint splinters, agouti claws, or fish teeth; pinewood soot was then rubbed into the wound. Nowadays the flesh is punctured with steel needles and gunpowder is applied in the incisions. The stains are as enduring as a human life. Face, arms, and breast are the body parts which are most frequently tattooed. The designs generally represent geometrical figures and resemble those engraved on calabashes and on river bowlders. At the time of Columbus (1502) a certain tribe living on the coast of Honduras, to the west of Cabo Gracias a Dios, had on arms and bodies "figures wrought with fire," representing jaguars, pumas, and castles. Pim and Seemann also state that tattooing by cautery was practiced by the Sumu of Rio Escondido. 304

NECKLACES.—Necklaces (M.: *nana-wilkaya;* T., P.: *ditmak-sitnin;* U.: *dakai-sitnaka*) of shell beads, quartz, greenstone, fish, and turtle bones, small vertebrae, snails, animal teeth, and seeds from certain plants were formerly in use. It is unknown, however, how these articles were formerly pierced without the aid of European imple- 301

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[19] According to Bell (b: 158) the male Sumu from the upper Rio Prinzapolca painted their faces black and red in stripes and diamonds.

ments. The Sumu also carried the nails and teeth extracted from
301 their unhappy victims (M. W.: 305). The seeds of the "lágrima
[824] de San Pedro" (*Coix lacryma-jobi* L.; M.: *twi ma;* S.: *am minik,
am mak*) are still in great favor.

In modern times such necklaces are nearly always made from small colored glass beads (M.: *lilyura;* T., P.: *ala;* U.: *tasañka*) of foreign manufacture. Bead ornaments are also worn by both sexes around the wrist, at the ankle, and below the knee. On festive occasions the men also put "hatbands" of beadwork around their hats. The Sumu women seldom wear the beads worked in a pretty design, as do the men, but they put the whole "hank" around the neck, just as they buy them in the shops, fastening the ends at the back of the neck. Sometimes they wear such a large quantity of these beads as to hinder them considerably in following their daily occupation.

Featherwork.—Feathers from certain bright-colored birds, as
301 parrots, toucans, macaws, curassows, etc., are made into ornaments
287 by attaching them to a string or to a thin vine with the aid of thread
from cotton or silk grass fiber. Such ornaments are comparatively
rare now; they are seen chiefly at the festival of the dead. The art
232 of the "tapirage" (from a native name of the Guianas), or artificial
means of obtaining yellow or red plumes from parrots or other birds,
as is still done in South America, appears to have been known to the
Sumu in former days. For this purpose they used the secretion from
[825] the skin of a common greenish-blue frog (*Dendrobates tinctorius*) with
black stripes and spots over the whole body, including the legs, which
was rubbed into the skin of the parrot, the subsequently appearing
young feathers being yellowish red instead of green.

Pectoral plates.—M. W. (308) mentions a thin breastplate worn
301 by the Miskito on festal occasions; it was made of a Spanish dollar
piece beaten out flat. Columbus also mentions such gold ornaments
which were worn around 1502 on the Atlantic coast of Costa Rica and
Panama.

Nose and lip ornaments.—The nasal septum was formerly per-
301 forated for the reception of a rod of bone or cane, an ornament which
304 has now entirely disappeared. Dampier (I, 32) describes and depicts
a curious cone or bell shaped ornament of turtle shell worn by the Kukra males of Corn Islands in the underlip. During early childhood the lip of the boy was pierced and the perforation kept open by means of little pegs. When arrived at the age of 14 or 15 (probably at the age of puberty) the boy inserted in the opening an ornament of tortoise shell, the under part of which was allowed to hang down over the chin; it was worn the whole day long, but it was taken out at night. About the latter part of the seventeenth century the Miskito wore on the chin a pendent plate of brass or shell, which was supported by a turtle-shell hook inserted in the lower lip (M. W.: 308).

Ear ornaments.—Formerly the ear lobes of both sexes were pierced 301 for the reception of ear plugs (see under Deformation of body) and 304 pendants were worn at festivals. Nowadays silver crescentic earrings (M.: *kyama-lula, kyama-dusa, kul-dusa, bapriñ;* S.: *tapana*) and finger rings (M.: *mat-diñka, mihta-diñka;* S.: *tinana*) are very common. These articles are either bought from foreign traders or from traveling Ladino goldsmiths.

Hair.—The men cut their hair short, but occasionally the elder 302 Miskito leave a lock of hair just back of the crown. About the middle of the nineteenth century the Sumu men wore their hair long and tied it in a queue (Bell, b: 158; Collinson, b: 149–150), but now they have it cut fairly short in a straight line just above the eyebrows and as far back as the temples. The women of both tribes cut their hair off just above the eyelashes in order to prevent it from hanging over the face, but on the sides and back it is allowed to hang down freely. Upon the death of a relative they cut it off short and lay it [764] in the grave with the deceased, a practice which formerly was also current among the men at the death of their wives.

At the settlement of Cariay, which probably existed in Costa Rica and not on the Mosquito Coast, as many believe, the women wore their hair cut short in 1502. The men, on the other hand, had it long; the fringe was cut moderately short, while the remainder of the hair was allowed to grow long and was bound up with fillets round the head in braids and rolls.

Both sexes devote much attention to their hair and they anoint it 302 frequently in order to render it softer and easier to handle. Their 824 favorite hair oil, known by the Miskito name *batana*, is obtained from the seeds of the oil palm (*Elaeis melanococca*). The Sumu also extract the oil from the seeds of various other trees, as the saba (*Guarea saba* or *Carapa guianensis*), the "eboe" (*Coumarouna oleifera*), the "yari" and the small huiscoyol palm (*Bactris horrida* Oerst.); they also buy *batana* from their neighbors. Nowadays these hair oils are mixed with foreign hair tonics, perfumes, and vaselines, but in former days the Indians added the aromatic rootstock or fruits of certain indigenous plants. Flowers and ribbons are also tied or stuck in the hair by the females.

A crude native comb was formerly made by tying together a number 412 of small sticks which tapered to a point at each end. Now only foreign-made combs are seen. Among the Miskito the latter are known by the English word *kum*, whereas the Sumu have native names (T.: *bas-kus;* P., U.: *bas-kahna*). Exquemelin (Fr. ed.: 302 II, 268–269) states that the Miskito wife used to comb her husband's hair every morning before the latter went out hunting and fishing.

Depilation.—Although the Indians take much pride in an abundant growth of hair on the head, they would formerly not allow any

302 other hair on the face, except that of the eyebrows and eyelids. The growth of beard was not liked and the hair was pulled out with the aid of two small thin sticks, between which they pinched it and plucked it out. A small stick of wood which had been partially split was also used for that purpose. Certain wood ashes were rubbed into the skin to check the growth. Now light beards and mustaches are sometimes met with.

DEFORMATION OF BODY

304 **Head.**—Head deformation (M.: *lal tanta daukaya;* T., P.: *tun labanin;* U.: *tun labanaka*) was until quite recently practiced by all the Sumu tribes except the Bawihka. The little child was placed in a [854] sort of cradle (M.: *kuhsañ;* T.: *pala;* P., U.: *lim*), which was suspended by means of bast-fiber ropes attached to the roof, so that it could be swung like a hammock. A folding flap of wood or of the "bratara" reed at the top of the cradle was tied firmly to the crown of the head, a thick layer of cotton being applied to prevent injury. The infant was kept in sitting position and secured in the cradle in such a manner that it could not move the head at all. From time to time the bandages and the folding flap were removed in order to allow the child a little freedom. The mother suckled her baby without unswathing it from the board. The object was to flatten the top of the head, as the ordinary-shaped head was considered ugly. Some Indians told me that they did not like to have such a round head as a monkey. Grossmann (b: 4) states, however, that the head was flattened in order to adapt it to the broad, flat cap which is worn at festivals. As the Sumu wear the hair hanging square cut to the eyebrows in front, the peculiar flatness of the skull may escape the casual observer.

At the present time this practice has been abandoned altogether and the cradles have been replaced by hammocks. The first mention of head deformation among the Sumu appears to have been made by M. W. (304, 305, 307). A short description thereof as practiced by the Ulwa of Rio Escondido is given by Collinson (b: 149–150). The Miskito claim to have never practiced head deformation and they call the Sumu derisively *Lal-tanta* "Flat-head," which word corresponds to the Spanish "Chatos" found in the old documents. One of the early writers claims, however, to have observed the custom among the Miskito of Sandy Bay in 1709;[20] it is very likely that the Indians in question were Sumu slaves.

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[20] Estos monstruos de las cabezas chatas tienen la costumbre de entablillarlas a las criaturas cuando nacen, y en creciendo les falta la facción de la frente, sin distancia alguna del pelo de la cabeza a los de las cejas, que les hace imponderablemente horribles (Alcedo y Herrera: p. XVIII).

Teeth.—Formerly the Sumu used to file or rather chip their teeth to sharp points; this was a laborious process and was performed by placing a dull knife against the back of the tooth, while the front of it was tapped with a stone implement. 304

Ears.—In 1502, on the testimony of Columbus, certain of the coastal tribes living to the west of Cabo Gracias a Dios, whether Miskito or Paya is uncertain, distended their ears to such an extent "that they might put a hen's egg into them." This statement is confirmed nearly two centuries later by Exquemelin (Sp. ed.: 185; Engl. ed.: 102; French ed.: I, 294–295), who states that the Indians of Rio Xagua (Rio Aguan) on the coast of Honduras were called by the buccaneers "Great Ears" on account of their extraordinary and large ears. Dampier (I, 32) also mentions a curious manner of ear deformation current among the Kukra of Corn Islands during the latter half of the seventeenth century. [171] Both sexes from these islands had their ear lobes pierced during childhood; "by continually stretching with great pegs the opening became as large as a milled five-shilling piece." They wore therein round, smooth pieces of wood, "so that their ears seemed to be all wood with a little skin about them."

Legs.—From the days of early infancy the Sumu females tie a narrow piece of cotton cloth firmly above the ankle and again below the knee. These bands, if ever removed, are immediately replaced by others. As a result of this custom the parts of the legs thus constricted are very thin, being hardly thicker than the actual bone, whereas the muscles of the calf bulge out to an abnormal degree. This custom, which was observed already by Dampier (I, 32) among the Kukra of the Corn Islands during the latter half of the seventeenth century, [171] is also current among many Carib tribes of South America. Similar bands are occasionally worn by the females at the wrist and below the elbow, but here they serve merely the purpose of ornamentation.

Various.—Circumcision is said to have been practiced in former days by some of the Sumu tribes, but the writer was unable to obtain any details regarding that custom. Until quite recently the face of the young Sumu was also scarified.

DWELLINGS

Villages.—The villages (M.: *ta͡uan*, from the English "town"; S.: *ęaná*) are constructed generally along the waterways, as the sea, lagoons, or rivers, which form the principal means of communication. 361 The Miskito of the lower Rio Coco and of certain parts of the Nicaragua coast have some large villages with from 100 to 500 inhabitants; but the Sumu settlements consist of only two to six huts and count from 6 to 25 inhabitants. On account of the danger from floods the inland villages are often perched upon high banks of the stream.

342 Before starting with the construction of a house the Indians cut down all the bush and clear the ground around the site. All the big trees which are liable to endanger the house in case of storms are felled. 364 Refuse is thrown into the water; pigs, dogs, and vultures act to some extent as scavengers. Crude brooms are made from various low 412 shrubs or from the fan-shaped leaves of several species of *Acanthorhiza* palms.

TYPE OF HOUSES.—Both tribes construct rectangular dwellings 342 (M.: *utla;* S.: *o, u*), which are generally rounded on the short sides in the shape of a semicircle; in recent years the regular oblong form has become more common. Among the Miskito of Honduras the elliptical and the circular type are also found.

BUILDING MATERIAL.—No remains of stone houses have been discovered in this area. The dwellings of these primitive tribes are built of perishable material. They consist of four hardwood posts (M.: *playa;* S.: *kal, rahni*) supporting a sharply sloping, well-thatched palm-leaf roof (M.: *bahna;* S.: *tun*). The eaves of the latter reach to within 4 feet from the ground, so that one has to stoop in order to get into the interior. In the primitive Sumu hut there were also one or more central posts (M.: *masa;* S.: *tun rahni*) which were generally elaborately carved. The posts are generally of ironwood (*Dialium* sp.), sapodilla (*Sapota sapotilla* Coville) or cortés (*Tecoma chrysantha* DC.). Several varieties of palms, as the cohune (*Attalea cohune*), akomphra, col de gallo or suita (*Calyptrogyne sarapiquensis*), and caña danta (*Geonoma* sp.) furnish the leaves for thatching. The latter work is made very carefully and a well-made roof lasts from 6 to 10 years without needing any repair. No nails are employed in the construction of the hut, the various parts being held together with strong lianas.

ATTIC.—Most houses are provided with a sort of cockloft, or rude attic, which is immediately under the roof. It is called *tint* by both tribes, perhaps after the English "tent." It is formed by laying split bamboo across the beams, about 7 feet from the ground. Ascent to it is made by means of a tree-ladder (M.: *mina-mañka, yamanmañka;* S.: *kalana*), consisting of a tree trunk wherein notches have been cut. Food is stored in the attic; it is also used as a sleeping apartment.

354 FIREPLACE.—The fire is made on the leveled mud floor, which is often raised a little to avoid dampness. The hearth (M.: *pa͡uta-wikta;* T.: *kuh-nanañ;* P.: *koh-pani;* U.: *kuh-suruka*) is formed by three logs which are placed so as to form a "Y"; they do not quite touch each other, however, but there is a free space between them, where the fire is made. These three logs (M.: *pa͡uta yuñk;* S.: *kuh-karan, koh suru*) support the cooking vessels; as the projecting ends burn gradually away, these logs have to be pushed forward

from time to time. There is no chimney in the Indian hut, the 354
smoke (M.: *kyasma*; S.: *wapne*) being allowed to escape through the roof, which consequently presents a dark brown color. This arrangement has the advantage of driving away the mosquitoes.

MODERN HUTS.—In regions where the Indians have had much 342
intercourse with foreigners they have improved their dwellings by the
addition of side walls and by a floor of split bamboo or wood; the 177
latter is elevated generally about 3 feet above the ground. The fireplace has then to be transferred to a small adjoining hut. In certain parts near the sea all the dwellings are erected on stilts, as the land is covered with water during the larger part of the rainy season.

In the interior the side walls (M.: *utla bler*; T.: *u dakna*; P., U.: *u tilwa*) consist of a wattlework of split bamboo. The Miskito living near the seaside make use of the stem of the papta palm or the leafstalk of the silico palm, set up vertically in the form of a stockade. This material seldom reaches as high as the roof; it is held in place by horizontally placed poles to which it is loosely tied. The coastal Miskito also employ a curious wickerwork of the split stem of the papta palm for house sides. Mud walls may occasionally be found and have been introduced by Ladinos or by the Black Carib.

Cattle and pigs are kept out of the interior by inserting several sticks crosswise in the doorway (M.: *utla-bila*; S.: *u-pas*, *e-pas*), or, in the case of an open shed, by building a rudimentary fence around the whole. In the more modern huts there is also a door and several windows, made of a framework of sticks, bamboo, and the like. The Indian dwelling of to-day is generally divided into two compartments of unequal size, the larger serving as living room and kitchen, while the smaller is used as dormitory.

COMMUNAL HOUSES.—Formerly long communal or multiple family 342
houses (palenques) were used by these tribes. Now only the individual family type is met with, which may, however, also be occupied by one or two married children with their respective families. The old communal houses were divided into as many compartments as there were families. Grünewald (32) gives a short description of such a Sumu dwelling from the Waspuk River; it measured 80 feet in length and 40 feet in width and was inhabited by a dozen families. Smaller multiple family houses appear to have been used in former days by the Miskito likewise; M. W. (301) states that Sandy Bay, the most important of their villages in those days (1699), consisted of twelve straggling houses with about 400 inhabitants. Formerly, when the various Indian tribes were continually engaged in wars, this arrangement facilitated the defense of their villages.

HOUSEHOLD FURNISHINGS

352 BEDS AND TABLES.—The primitive Indian bed, which has practically disappeared, consisted merely of a layer of tree bark, Heliconia leaves, or deer skin, spread on the ground; it is known among the Miskito by the name *puhlak taya* "balsa tree bark," while the Sumu call it *takal* (T., P.) and *lim* (U.).

Nowadays stages of split bamboo serve indiscriminately as beds and tables. These structures (M.: *krikri;* S.: *kirikiri*) are raised about 3 feet from the ground and are supported by four strong posts. Instead of sheets of bamboo the whole may be covered with wild cane sticks. Sheets of pounded tree bark serve as blankets
513 and as bed sheets (M.: *nina-pala, munta-pala;* T., P.: *dañ-rina;* U.: *dañ-paknak*); in Honduras the Miskito also use mats (*tnasi*) made from a rush growing around the swamps and lagoons. Pillows (M.: *tilar*, corrupted from the English; S.: *tunana*) are stuffed with cotton
[324] or the fiber surrounding the seeds of the silk cotton and of the balsa trees. The Miskito living at the mouth of Rio Patuca slice the upper part of the stem of the small "palmetto" palm, which grows in the neighborhood, and use the thin flakes to stuff pillows and mattresses.
[439] The mosquito nets, called *pabulo* by both tribes, are made of opaque cotton sheeting of foreign manufacture, so that each bed forms practically a separate compartment.

HAMMOCKS.—While at home, hammocks (M.: *silmika;* S.: *wah*) are seldom used during the night, and then only by unmarried boys and girls. They are, however, carried along on long journeys. During the day the men dream away much time in the hammocks, but the women use them rarely. They may be made of cotton, tree bark, or Bromelia fibers.

CRADLES.—In former days cradles (M.: *kuhsañ;* T., P.: *pala;* U.:
854 *lim*) were used by the Sumu in connection with the habit of flattening the heads of babies. (See under Deformation of body.) Since this practice has gone out of use cradles have disappeared entirely and small hammocks are now used for the children. The dried claws of crabs and other objects were tied to the cradle, making a strange rattling noise at each movement.

352 STOOLS.—Low wooden stools (M.: *sulati;* T., P.: *sisi;* U.: *panba*) with three or four legs and a flat or concave surface, hewn from solid blocks of wood, are used by the women, unless they sit directly on the ground. They may be square or oblong and suggest the stone metates found in the ancient sites. They range in size from diminutive forms used as toys by the children to benches of over 3 feet in length. When a stranger arrives at the Indian hut one of these seats or a hammock will immediately be offered to him.

CHESTS.—Wooden chests or trunks, known by their English names, are used to store clothing and valuables. They may be of foreign manufacture or made locally from the Spanish cedar (*Cedrela* sp.). 352

ILLUMINATION.—Pine-wood torches are used for illuminating purposes. In certain regions where the pitch pine (*Pinus tenuifolia* Benth.) is absent or scarce the Indians make rude candles by surrounding a cotton thread with beeswax or with the gum of certain trees, as the rubber tree (*Castilla* sp.) or the locust tree (*Hymenaea courbaril* L.). Small baskets, filled with big tropical fireflies, are also used occasionally as lanterns by children. 354

VARIOUS.—The products of the plantation are generally thrown on the floor or put on the tables or in the attic. Little shelves are suspended from the rafters in order to keep cooked food, meat, or fruits free from the numerous creeping and crawling insects which infest the dwellings. 356

Under the roof are seen the various tools, the fishing and hunting implements; they are stuck in the thatch or held in crude racks. From the rafters depend bags of pine-wood soot, bottles with red pigment, and hair oils or small *piepis* gourds (*Lagenaria vulgaris* Ser.) containing shot.

DOMESTIC UTENSILS

FIREMAKING.—Fire was produced formerly by the "twirling" method. A notch was made in a piece of wild cane and a hard-wood stick placed in the cavity. This stick was held perpendicularly and twirled rapidly round and round until fire was produced. Cotton was used as tinder. A very curious method practiced by the Sumu or Paya of Rio Patuca has been described by the Franciscan missionary Fernando de Espino.[28] 372

Steel and flint were introduced in early days for kindling fire, but have now been replaced practically everywhere by matches of foreign manufacture. [77]

FIRE FANS.—In order to accelerate the flame a dozen feathers from large birds, generally the guan (*Penelope cristata*) are tied together in the shape of a fan (M.: *kuru-taya*; S.: *uhlaus*).

TONGS.—Among the Miskito of Pearl Lagoon bamboo tongs or tweezers may occasionally be seen, to pull roasted plantains, cassava 412

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[28] Ha criado Dios en lo mas retirado de la montaña un bejuco muy largo, sin, nudos, a manera de ramos de mimbre; cogen este y cortanlo en trozos pequeños de a palmo; pónenlos al humo, y en estando bien secos, cuando han menester fuego, cogen uno, y con las dos palmas de las manos lo estrujan como al molinillo para hacer chocolate, y cuando ellos ven que está de cierto temple, soplan una punta o extremidad y por la otra parte sale fuego, y se enciende como mecha de escopeta, porque él en sí es estoposo por de dentro. De otro modo sacan fuego, que es el común de los indios, estregando un palo con otro (Serrano y Sanz: 367–368)

412 or other food out of the hot ashes. This tool has also been observed among the Ulwa of Rio Escondido (Wickham, c: 200) and it is very common among the Rama and the Guatuso. The two last-named tribes, however, make these tongs from a small species of palm, the "caña danta" or "ahtak," which they call, like the tool itself, by the names *kiskis* (Rama) and *kaskas* (Guatuso).[23]

Mortars.—Large wooden mortars (M.: *unu*, *no*) are found among the Miskito to pound grains and fruits with the aid of a hard wooden pestle (M.: *unu mihta*). The latter is generally single headed and tapers gradually toward the handle end; the double-headed type, which is practically cylinder shaped, is also found occasionally. This mortar has a wide distribution in South America, Africa and Oceania. It was found among the Miskito toward the end of the seventeenth century and is mentioned in those days side by side with the metate (M. W.: 307, 308).

Metates.—The Sumu do not know the wooden mortar, but they employ the metate or mealing stone (M.: *walpa-akbaya;* T., P.: *ki-watak;* U.: *ki-tiknaka*) for grinding maize and cacao and for pounding fruits and berries. The common metate, which may be found in almost every household, is a flat-topped, natural river bowlder, with a rounded waterworn pebble serving as muller or "mano" (M.: *walpa mihta;* S.: *ki mak*).

415 Cooking vessels.—Light tripod iron pots (M.: *dikwa;* S.: *suba*, *yasama suba*) are now found in every household, and have replaced the earthen vessels (M.: *sumi;* S.: *suba*, *sau suba*) for cooking purposes. In order to remove the hot pot from the fire the Indians use short wooden sticks with a hook at one extremity, which they put round the ears of the pot; it is known by the following names: M.: *tiñkrus*, *piñkrus;* T.: *iskrusta;* P.: *pan-alni;* U.: *pan-alka*.

Water containers.—Large calabashes with a small round hole cut in the apex, just large enough to insert a finger, are the common water canteens (M.: *kakmuntara;* T., P.: *sulun;* U.: *taman*). This is the "goat" of the Creoles. Sometimes a corncob is inserted in the opening as a stopper.

Segments of the large species of bamboo are also used to haul water in certain regions. They are made from a section of bamboo stem, so that a nodal septum serves as bottom, while the stem is cut off immediately in front of the next occurring nodal septum.

Fermented beverages are stored in large earthen vessels (M.: *sumi;* S.: *suba*, *sau suba*); wooden casks of foreign manufacture and homemade troughs are also employed for this purpose.

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[171] [23] The Cuna and Chocó Indians of Panama use a similar tool consisting also of a double-bent sliver from the stem of a small palm, while the Ona and Yamana of Tierra del Fuego use a split tree branch for pincers. (Vide E. Nordenskiöld, Comparative Ethnographical Studies, vol. 8, Göteborg, 1930, pp. 65-67.)

DISHES.—Calabashes (M.: *kahmi;* S.: *sutak*) take the place of 415 plates, cups and glasses in the Indian houses; they are made from the fruit of the calabash tree, which is cut in two equal halves, and the soft watery pulp with the seeds removed. The thin, hard, woody shell is not fragile and lasts a long time.

By piercing such a calabash with small holes a strainer or collander (M.: *lili;* T., P.: *lilihna;* U.: *dilana*) is obtained; this is the "chachi" of the Creoles.

Large cups without handles, and basins are bought in the local shops; they are known by the name *mak.*

Square, round, or oval-shaped wooden bowls are made by the Indians of mahogany or other woods; they are known by their English names. These bowls are thick and clumsy and shaped like shallow basins; occasionally they are provided with very short, stout legs.

VARIOUS KITCHEN UTENSILS.—Flat withe baskets (M.: *usnuñ, uslen;* S.: *uslun, wah-tuina, sidan*), hanging under the roof in the smoke of the fire contain large wooden spoons (M.: *kustara,* from the Spanish "cuchara"; S.: *pan-yamna*), called "pat sticks" by the Creoles, small single-headed wooden pestles or wabul sticks (M.: *tuskaya;* T., P.: *pan-tirias;* U.: *pan-ruknaka*), cacao stirring sticks or "swizzle sticks" (M.: *purbaya;* S.: *pan-korona, pan-poronaka*). These various utensils are made from Spanish cedar, mahogany, sapodilla, or rosewood.

Iron graters are seen occasionally. The Sumu have a native name (*pân-alna*) for this implement, while the Miskito call it by its English name.

The rough leaves of a small tree (*Curatella americana* L.) and of a 824 vine (*Davilla kunthii* St. Hil.) are employed instead of sandpaper for polishing purposes. Both these plants belong to the Dilleniaceae 356 and are called "raspa-guacal," "hoja-chigüe" or "chumico" by the Ladinos; among the Miskito, Sumu, and Creoles they are known by the name *yahal.*

TOOLS

Before the discovery of America these Indians had few utensils 412 and implements of stone; such articles were chiefly of wood, clay, shell, bone, etc. It would be nearer the truth to say that the Miskito and Sumu were living in the wood age instead of the stone age. Stone objects are, of course, the ones which have been preserved mostly. Fish teeth, snail and tortoise shells, quartz, flint, pebbles, and the like were used as scraping implements. Knives of bamboo are still used to sever the naval string of newborn babies.

MACHETE.—The machete (M., T., P.: *ispara,* from the Spanish "espada"; U.: *masat*), a heavy cutlasslike knife of about 2 feet in length, is the vade mecum of these Indians. It is their faithful

412 companion at work and on voyage, and the main tool in house, garden, field, and bush. The Indian uses it to dig postholes for his house, to cut down small trees, shrubs, lianas, grass, or weeds. With the machete he cuts down the underbrush when making a plantation and clears the latter from time to time of weeds and young bush. With the machete he also defends himself against wild animals, snakes, and the like, and, if necessary, against his own kind, which is often more dangerous than the wild beasts of the forest.

439 Formerly all the machetes used on the Mosquito Coast were imported from England, but in later years they were brought from the United States and from Germany.

412 313 **Axes.**—The Indians are very good at plying the ax (M.: *asa*, from the Spanish "hacha"; S.: *ki*, *kidak*), as many of them have been working at the mahogany camps. The export of this valuable wood has been going on with various long interruptions for over two centuries. Even the women handle the ax fairly well, and cut up small tree stems to be used as firewood. The rectangular-shaped so-called American felling axes or Canada wedge axes are preferred by these Indians; in shape they resemble somewhat the *tuba* fish, and for that reason the Miskito call them *tub'asa*.

412 172 **Stone axes.**—Single or double bladed stone axes or celts (M.: *alwani mahbra*, *imyula mahbra*; S.: *alwana suma*, lit.: "thunder egg" or "lightning egg") have been unearthed in various parts of the country. They are grooved or ungrooved, and were firmly fixed in the thick part of a stone-cut wooden handle, or the handle was merely tied firmly to the ax with the aid of a withe passing around the groove. Some of these celts were provided with a short handle cut of the same solid rock. Dampier (I, 85) mentions some good grooved axes among the Indians of Rio Escondido (Kukra-Sumu), which were "flat and sharp at both ends," and were 10 inches long, 4 inches broad, and 3 inches thick in the middle.

Two simple stone axes from the Mosquito Coast have been depicted by Bovallius (II, 299, figs. 81, 82). Three fine monolithic axes from the Bluefields region have been described and illustrated by Saville (b: 34–36, fig. 15). The blade of these axes is of a form foreign to Central America, resembling certain axes from the Lesser Antilles and northern South America. In these three specimens the rounded handle, which has a length of 12 to 12½ inches, is slightly curved. They are respectively in the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation (a), the Peabody Museum of Harvard University (b), and the United States National Museum (c). The first one of them (a) was acquired in 1924 in Nicaragua by Mr. D. E. Harrower. The blade is comparatively longer than in the other axes of this type and the handle is elaborately finished, being decorated with three series of longitudinal grooves. The second ax (b) is carved from a heavy, compact, brownish-green stone with decorations somewhat similar to the preceding one, but the handle has, besides, three transverse oval decorations over the section adjacent to the blade. The third specimen was collected by Mr. J. O. Thomas of Bluefields. It is plain and made of indurated volcanic tufa. The two last-mentioned axes (b and c) have already been described and pictured in a previous publication by Saville (a: 10–11, pl. v, Nos. 5 and 4). Another beautiful ax, perhaps of the same type, with blade and handle carved of one piece of heavy, compact, light-colored rock, was unearthed at Bluefields in 1849 and is now in the Museum of the Moravian Mission at Herrnhut in Saxony.[illegible] 412 172

A beautifully shaped double-bladed stone ax was obtained by Boyle in 1866 on the upper Rio Escondido and pictured by him (b: II, 144, fig. 1); it is now in the British Museum. It is apparently of volcanic stone and is 17¾ inches long and 12¾ inches wide across the blades. The end of the flat handle is perforated. The illustration has been copied by Bancroft (IV, 59, fig. 3) and by Joyce (18, pl. I, fig. 1). Saville (a: 11–12, pl. VI, fig. 1) describes and illustrates this ax together with two other double-bladed specimens from the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua, which are fashioned from an igneous rock, possibly diorite. These two were obtained from a Miskito chief by Mr. J. O. Thomas of Bluefields and are now in the United States National Museum. The largest one of them (Saville, a: 12, pl. VI, fig. 3) is 10¾ inches long and 6¾ inches across the blades; the handle is rounded and has a conical end. The other specimen (pl. VI, fig. 2) is only 8¾ inches in length and 7¾ inches wide across the blades. Like that illustrated by Boyle, it is perforated through the end of the flat handle. Other stone axes from the Mosquito Coast are in the collection of Doctor Heuhaus in the Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin (Lehmann, b: 715).

The modern Indians do not know that these stone axes are artificial and that they are the work of their forefathers. They believe them to be "thunder-bolts," as do also the Creoles and Negroes; the same idea is also entertained by the Ladinos, who call these celts "piedra de raya." It is very probable that these antique axes were also used as defensive weapons in former days, and perhaps also for ceremonial uses.

ADZES.—Adzes are now very common and are used for the making of canoes and other objects of wood; they are used in similar manner as those of our joiners and carpenters. This tool is probably of post-Columbian origin, although the Sumu have a native name (*paris*) for it; the Miskito call it *ats* from the English name. Stone adzes have never been found on the Mosquito Coast, although they are frequently 412

[illegible] Cf. Frederick Starr in Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie, Leiden, vol. v, 1892, pp. [illegible].

412 met with in certain parts of South America. The ordinary stone ax may also have been utilized as an adze by merely shifting the handle fixation from a vertical to a horizontal plane.

Hoe.—In many huts a hoe can be found nowadays; it is used on the fields and in clearing away the grass and weeds growing in front of the dwellings. The hoe is of recent introduction and is known by its English name (u).

Knife.—Large knives (M.: *skiro*, *kisuro*, from the Spanish "cuchillo"; S.: *kohbil*) now form part of every household.

252 Sugar mill.—A primitive sugar mill (M.: *trañko;* T., P.: *tisnak tiihnin;* U.: *tisnak panka*) is employed by these Indians to squeeze the juice out of sugarcane. A stout post is buried partly in the ground, so that it will reach about 3 or 4 feet above the surface. Close to its upper extremity a wooden slab is mortised in and wedged tight. Just above this slab, which looks like a small platform, there is a hole in the post, where a stout bar (M.: *mihta;* S.: *tiñ*) fits loosely. One of the women lays a piece of cane on this "platform," her husband inserts the pole in the hole and presses downward, crushing the cane, whereupon the juice flows into a receptacle placed on the ground. The woman slips the cane forward until every part of it is crushed, and finally twists it like a rope to wring out all the juice.

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171 This mill is common in the regions bordering on the Caribbean Sea. Several mills of this type, found in South America and on the Isthmus of Panama, have been figured by Nordenskiöld.[34] It is well known that sugarcane was introduced into the New World by the Spaniards; still this type of mill is never met with among the whites. On the other hand, the negroes of eastern Central America and the Bush negroes of Guiana use it commonly, more so than the Indians themselves. According to the prominent African specialists Seligman and Lindblom, sugar mills of this type are not met with in the Dark Continent. Neither are they known from Melanesia. Nordenskiöld[35] believes, therefore, that this implement has been invented by American Indians in post-Columbian days, when they had become acquainted with sugarcane. In view of the fact that this sugar mill is more common among the negroes than among the Indians, I am inclined to believe that it is a post-Columbian invention made in America (probably in the West Indies) by negro slaves, who were largely employed on the sugar estates. Even to this day it is not met with among the Sumu of the interior, who crush the canes in primitive wooden roller mills turned by handspikes (cf. Wickham, b: 216; c: 206).

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[34] Comparative Ethnographical Studies, vol. VIII, Göteborg, 1930, pp. 80–84, figs. 39–42.

[35] Ubi supra, p. 82.

DIVISION OF LABOR

Domestic work.—Such domestic industries as spinning, weaving, and the manufacture of pottery, bark cloth, and bead ornaments are female occupations. Tailoring is, however, frequently in the hands of the men, some of whom even make the clothes for their wives. The preparation of food is strictly reserved to the women, the men never condescending to do any cooking, except while away from home. The barbecuing of the chase is, however, the work of the men. 462

Fields.—The husband prepares a patch of the forest for the making of a plantation, by cutting down the trees and cleaning the ground by burning; but the care of the field, that is the planting, weeding, and reaping of the crop, is left to the women.

Other outside occupations.—The manufacture of fishing and hunting implements, and of canoes and accessories thereto, are man's work. The women fish with the hook, but all other methods of fishing are reserved to the men. The latter fell trees for firewood and cut them into convenient lengths to haul, but the females have to fetch and split it. The woman goes to the waterside to bring the game which her husband has killed and brought in his canoe, but she never accompanies him on the actual hunt, being unacquainted with the handling of hunting weapons.

Load carrying.—The carrying of heavy loads is usually left to the women. For this purpose they use a carrying strap, known by the local Spanish name "bombador" or "bambador." The latter consists of a narrow strip of bark cloth, both extremities of which are attached to the burden. The load is first lifted on the back with the assistance of another person and then the pack strap is put around the forehead. The male Indians do not carry anything in this manner, but they secure the package to the back with the aid of shoulder straps, as do the Ladinos. The Spanish-speaking women, however, carry loads generally upon the head, as is the case with the negroes of both sexes. When very tired the Indians give a sort of whistle to catch their breath (M.: *wiska puhbaya*; T. & P.: *wiska urapdanis*; U.: *wiska urapdanaka*, lit.: "to blow the breath"). 462 482

Day labor work.—In former days many young Miskito, living to the west of Cabo Gracias a Dios, went annually to British Honduras to work there in the mahogany or logwood camps. They left about May and returned in November or December. During this time the settlements on the coast were practically without male inhabitants, except for the boys and old men. The women then had to subsist on fish, crabs, oysters, cockles, the eggs of alligators, turtles, and iguanas, and vegetable food. Now all these Indians easily find work in their own country, either in the mahogany camps or in the 464 [484] [262]

444 gold mines; or they work as paddlers on the rivers, which are practically the only means of communication.

[511] The Sumu, on the other hand, are more timid and less enterprising. They are unwilling to leave their wives and children for a length of time in order to work for the benefit of the white men. Besides, even to this day, their wants are few, and they can easily do without practically any article of foreign manufacture. Formerly, however, many of them were active as rubber bleeders, but owing to East Indian competition, the export of that commodity from the Mosquito Coast has stopped altogether.

TRADE AND BARTER

438 **Interchange of commodities.**—Among such rude hunting and fishing tribes as the Miskito and Sumu only a very restricted trade can have existed in former days. The rivers, lagoons, and the sea were practically the only means of communication, and this is still the case. The interchange of commodities was generally effected by [436] barter. The Miskito appear to have also employed beads of sea shells as money, while the Sumu of the interior used cacao beans for the same purpose.[30] We are told by M. W. (304) that these two tribes, which were continually in a state of hostility, observed a truce on appointed days; they then met on an island in the lower Rio Coco for the purpose of trading.

556 These Indians live under an almost perfect equality, and there are no rich or poor among them. They do not strive to accumulate wealth, and the great unwearied exertion, found among our civilized societies, is unknown among them.

317 **Former articles of barter.**—The Miskito used to evaporate salt from the water of the sea and lagoons and collect pretty sea
438 shells suitable for beads. These commodities were exchanged with the Sumu for pottery, cotton goods, hammocks, bark cloth, and rough canoes.

484 During the latter part of the seventeenth century, and for many years following, the Miskito undertook daring sea voyages as far south as Chiriqui Lagoon in Panama, and occasionally even beyond that region. These expeditions were, however, not organized with peaceful trading in view, but for the purpose of stealing cacao from [721] the Spanish settlers at Rio Matina (Costa Rica), and capturing Indians to be sold to the English traders of Jamaica.

439 **Present-day commodities.**—Nowadays the Indian's wants from the outside world are many. The Miskito, who are less primitive than their neighbors, were already in commercial relations with

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[30] According to G. N. Collins (see Safford in Smithsonian Report for 1916, p. 421) this use still persists in the Mexican State of Chiapas.

the English freebooters of Jamaica during the latter part of the 439
seventeenth century. The most important of the foreign-made
articles, which are now considered indispensable to the bulk of the
Indians, are the following: Salt, machetes, axes, knives, adzes, hoes,
light 3-legged iron cooking pots, fishhooks, triangular files, shotguns
with ammunition (powder, shot, percussion caps), cotton goods of
various patterns (calico, gingham, salampores, drilling, blue dungaree),
bright-colored handkerchiefs, ribbons, thread, needles, beads,
combs, small looking-glasses, jew's-harps, clay pipes, tobacco, etc.
In order to obtain these commodities the Indians will work for a short
time as day laborers, or sell some forest or agricultural products.
Very little value is placed upon labor performed at home, and certain [435]
homemade articles, which have taken a considerable time to prepare,
are often bartered for a mere trifle.

METAL WORKING

Gold ornaments appear to have been known in pre-Columbian 301
days and were used for ceremonial purposes and for personal decoration.
Breastplates of wrought gold were already observed by Columbus
in 1502 at Cariay, but this locality must be placed in the
territory of Costa Rica and not on the Mosquito Coast, as has been
done by various historians. About 1699 silver breastplates, either
bought from the Europeans or hammered by themselves out of
silver coins, formed part of the gala dress of the Miskito (M. W.: 308);
they may have been emblems or insignia of authority.

Ornaments of gold were probably introduced among the Miskito and
Sumu by way of trade from the Pacific side of Nicaragua or from the
Talamanca region of Costa Rica, where they were common. They
were probably the work of the Chiriqui goldsmiths, who had attained
a high degree of skill in the making of low-grade gold objects. But
they must have existed very sparingly on the Mosquito Coast, for in
recent days none has been discovered in the country. Figurines and
amulets of the precious metal are said to have been discovered in
the Pispis mining district, around Cuera Hill, on the Rio Wawa, and
at El Dorado (Honduras), but these reports need confirmation.

The rude tribes of the Mosquito Coast did not know the art of 326
working gold, copper, bronze, or any other metal; this art was known,
however, to the Indians of Bolivia, Peru, Mexico, and other regions
of America in pre-Columbian days. Placer mining is carried on in 316
many parts of the country by whites, negroes, and Ladinos, but not
by the Indians. There is no reliable record of the Miskito and Sumu
knowing how to wash gold from the sands of the numerous auriferous
streams before the arrival of the Europeans. Even to-day

316 this is done by them in isolated cases only; they use a round, low bowl or *batea*, in which they place some of the auriferous sand together with some water. Then, whirling the *batea* rapidly, a feathery stream of mingled sand and water flows constantly over the edge. When the sand is nearly all exhausted, the bowl is filled again, and this process is repeated a number of times. Finally a little deposit of grains of gold will be found at the bottom.

These Indians have no name in their own language for either gold or silver, but they call these precious metals "yellow money" and "white money" respectively. Their word for money (M. and T.: *lala;* P. and U.: *lihwan*) might have designated gold originally, or perhaps metal in general. Still, there is a native name for iron or steel (M. and T.: *silak;* P. and U.: *yasama*).

301 439 411 Cheap bracelets, earrings, and finger rings of foreign origin are now very common among both tribes. The iron and steel objects, which are now in universal use on the coast, have not been cast or forged locally, but have been obtained in trade. Harpoons are made from our common triangular files with the aid of another file. This process is very slow and tedious. The iron points or "heads" for arrows and spears are generally made from old cask hoops or from other scrap iron.

STONEWORK

324 Metates.—Stonework is practically limited to the manufacture of crude metates or maize grinders (M.: *walpa-akbaya;* T., P.: *ki-watak;* U.: *ki-tiknaka*) which are used for grinding maize, cacao, or other grains or fruits. They are merely plane slabs of a tufflike rock with a slightly concave grinding surface, on which the grains are crushed with the aid of a handle or metlapil (M.: *walpa-mikta;* S.: *ki-mak*). These crude metates are made with the aid of a hard blackish stone chisel (M.: *kwa-sikas;*[27] T., P.: *pransa, paransa;* U.: *ki-tisma*).

324 172 Antiguales.—Elaborate metates, cylindrical bowls and mortars of a hard granitelike material are occasionally found on the Mosquito Coast. Isolated specimens of these articles are met with, but as a rule they are found in deposits from miniature size, perhaps children's toys, to giant sizes for ceremonial purposes. These objects exist in all stages of manufacture, but the finished product is now very scarce, having either been taken away or broken.

Such old sites or "antiguales," as they are known locally, are especially numerous in Honduras between the rivers Plátano and Paulaya; they are found generally on some elevated spot within a short distance from a small creek. A picture of one of these sites is given by Spinden (536). Occasionally these antiguales are surrounded by low walls, perhaps remains of former fortifications; others again were apparently defended by ditches and perhaps by palisades also. 324 172

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[27] At Ciudad Antigua, in the Nicaraguan department of Nueva Segovia, I heard this tool called "cuabul" (=*kwa-bul*) by the Spanish-speaking inhabitants. In the Miskito language *sikas* means "black," while *bul* is "mottled" or "speckled."

ANCIENT METATES.—The metates found in these deposits are supported by three long, well-centered legs, which are generally covered with geometric designs; in front there is a bird or animal head (eagle, turtle, alligator, or jaguar). The Indians occasionally dig them up to be used in their households. Some fine specimens have been broken by man or by falling trees. Giant metates, which may reach over 6 feet in length, are still found, but the sculptured head has generally been removed from them. They remind us of the wooden stools still found in the Indian dwellings and it is very likely that they were used as ceremonial seats. In the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, there is a metate from the Mosquito Coast (Hodge: 56). Several large specimens from an important site discovered near Cucra Hill (to the south of Pearl Lagoon) about 30 years ago upon clearing the land for making banana plantations are in the American Museum of Natural History. The Peabody Museum of Harvard University also owns a few metates from the vicinity of Bluefields. [531]

ANCIENT BOWLS.—Cylindrical bowls with three short legs and made from a very hard granitelike rock are also found in the above-mentioned old sites, but they are less common than the metates. Two knobs near the rim, carved into bird or animal heads, serve as handles. These bowls or vases are ornamented with geometric motives, of which the most common is the incised guilloche, or rope pattern, of either curvilinear or angular construction.

The first description, accompanied with illustrations, of these "granite vases" from the Mosquito Coast is given by Pownall (318–324, pl. XXVI), who figures three of these objects. Two of these belonged to Lord Hillsborough. One of these latter (No. 1) is very small and has an animal head on one side. The larger one (No. 2) is more interesting; it is about 12 to 15 inches in diameter and 10 inches in height, with plain legs. There are two rows of diamond-shaped ornaments on the body of the vessel; the two handles take the form of a head and a tail, but the head is partly broken off. The third vessel (No. 3) is about 10 to 12 inches in diameter and height, but at the top it is somewhat narrower; it has carved legs and two head ornaments and is perhaps the best specimen in good condition found in the country. The bowls No. 2 and No. 3 have been reproduced by Humboldt (I, p. 238, and II, pl. 39) and by Dupaix (I, div. II, 27–28, and II, suppl. pl. VII, No. 1). The illustration of No. 3 has been copied also by Bancroft (IV, 26).

324 172 Pownall (319) refers to another of these bowls in the British Museum, which belonged to a collection brought from Jamaica by Sir Hans Sloane. This is perhaps the one depicted by Joyce (p. 74, pl. vi, fig. 1) which resembles No. 3 described above.

In 1921 the writer found a number of these vessels, but all badly broken up, on the right bank of Rio Paulaya. Some of them were not detached from the quarry out of which they were formed. It is, however, not known from what site the marble was quarried. Bowls of similar material and technique have also been met with in the Bay Islands and in the valley of Rio Ulua. A large specimen is in the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation (Hodge: 56).

532 172 STATUES OR CARVED PILLARS.—At certain old sites may be found some high slabs of stone which were originally placed upright, reminding one of our tombstones. Nearly all of them have now tumbled down. Occasionally some greatly obliterated geometric designs, or spirals, may be found on them.[illegible]

Spinden (539) pictures a stela or stone pillar on Rio Tocomacho (Honduras) which is 8 feet in height and nearly a foot square. It is covered on all sides with pictographic designs, chiefly spirals and scrolls; on one of the four faces there is a grotesque figure with a reptilelike creature on its head. Such stone pillars may also be found in other parts of the Mosquito Coast, but they are not common. Large stone statues, attaining as great a height as 12 feet, are, however, the outstanding feature of the archeology of the Pacific half of Nicaragua, especially of the great lake region.

Le Baron (217–222) describes and depicts some stone ruins from the left bank of Rio Prinsapolca, about 134 miles above its mouth. They consist of three monoliths, about 8 feet high, forming a triangle; the ground between them was paved with stones. These monoliths had fallen to the ground and were broken; on some of the faces there were rude carvings, greatly obliterated.

CARVED ROCKS

212 172 Pictographs may be found on the rocks in the bed of nearly all the larger streams, generally at the rapids and falls. They must have been made many centuries ago, for they are considerably waterworn, and often may be followed easier with the finger than with the naked eye. Many of these carved rocks are visible during the dry season only and are completely under water during the rainy months, owing to the rise of the rivers. (Fig. 1.)

WHERE THEY ARE FOUND.—Such carved rocks have been observed by the present writer at different places on the Rio Coco (at Wirapani,

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[illegible] The modern Indians have no traditions concerning these ruins found in their territory, and ascribe them to the evil spirits.

Waspuk, Kiwras, above Raiti, at Kunkun mawan and at Tawit); 212
they are known to exist also in the rivers Plátano, Patuca, Wawa, 172
Prinsapolca, Tuma, Punta Gorda, Indio, and Maíz. They appear to be particularly numerous on the Siquia and Mico, which two streams together form the Rio Escondido or Bluefields River (Boyle, b: I, 296–299; Pim and Seemann: 401; Wickham, b: 243, 245; Belt: 52–53). Some extravagant stories of great statues carved in human and animal shape and hewn out of a solid cliff on the upper Rio Mico have been circulating on the coast, but it appears that these giant statues are merely rude carvings on the rocks similar to the ones found in other parts of the country. Carved rocks are found in many rivers emptying into the Caribbean Sea, and a good account of those met with in South America has been given by Koch-Grünberg.[20] The geographical names Gualpulban (M.: *walpa-ulban*), Quiulna (T., P.: *ki-ulna*) and Quiultan (U.: *ki-ultañ*), which are found scattered in various parts of the Mosquito Coast, may furnish a clue to the presence of such pictographs in the neighborhood. These various names mean "written rock" or "painted rock" and correspond to the Spanish "piedra pintada."

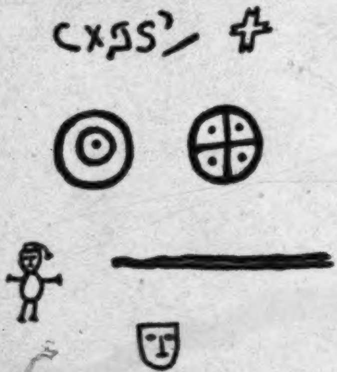

FIGURE 1.—Carved rocks from the Kirwas Rapids (Rio Coco)

MOTIFS.—The carvings consist chiefly of very curious figures, which it is often difficult to identify. Sometimes they represent human figures, but the greater part of them appear to be animal designs: jaguars, alligators, monkeys, frogs, tortoises and serpents. Occasionally geometric figures, as spirals and scrolls, are depicted, but floral designs are conspicuous by their absence. Sapper (a: 275) pictures some carved rocks from various parts of Rio Coco: Valpa ûlpan (= Wirapani), Kiulna (= Kunkun mawan) and Davuit (= Tawit). A photograph of a large bowlder with carved figures from Rio Plátano is given by Spinden (537).

ARTISTS.—We do not know who were the authors of this work. The Miskito are by all means out of the question, for they are comparatively new immigrants into the regions where pictographs are to be found. They ascribe them to the Sumu, who formerly occupied most of the territory in question. But the latter Indians are unanimous in declaring that this work was done by the evil spirits (*walasa*) at a time when the rocks were still soft.

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[20] Südamerikanische Felszeichnungen. Berlin, 1907.

212 172 **Writing.**—The carvings on one of the bowlders at the Kiwras Rapids on Rio Coco are said to resemble somewhat the characters of the Latin alphabet. Wickham (b: 245) heard of some "writing" on rocks of Rio Mico, which he considered—quite erroneously of course—inscriptions in Latin made by the early Jesuit missionaries. Neither Miskito nor Sumu appear to have possessed the art of writing as did their western neighbors, the Nicarao and Chorotega. According to Oviedo the two latter tribes had books of parchment made from deer skins. Picture writing was also practiced, and is still, by the Cuna Indians of Panama, as has recently been ascertained by Nordenskiöld.[illegible]

RUBBER COLLECTING

314 439 In former days the Indians used to collect rubber from a wild-growing tree (*Castilla* sp.), which is found nearly all over the country. This industry started about 1860, first on Rio San Juan, and gradually spread to the remainder of the Mosquito Coast. The Indians sold their rubber to the local merchants, who generally made large advances to them. About 1912 and 1913, when the export of rubber ceased, owing to the low price caused by the large production of plantation rubber in the British and Dutch East Indies, many Indians found themselves heavily in debt to the merchants.

314 The rubber collectors or "huleros" first made a rude ladder out of the lianas that hang from the trees; this was done by tying short pieces of wood across them with the aid of smaller lianas. Later iron spurs were introduced and attached to the feet to climb the trees. With the machete they then scored the bark with cuts having the shape of the letter V, the point being downward. Such cuts were made all the way up the trunk, at a distance of about 3 feet from each other; they extended nearly round the tree, but the latter was on no account to be completely girdled. At the bottom of these series of cuts a spout was inserted to conduct the latex juice into buckets or other containers. In about half an hour all the whitish milk had run out of the tree.

Afterwards the latex was strained and caused to coagulate by the addition of an alkaline decoction made from the juice of the chajmol vine (*Ipomoea bona-nox* L.; M.: *tatako;* T. and P.: *tutuk;* U.: *ulupuy*) or from that of a liana (*Calonyction speciosum*); this was combined with the latex in the proportion of 1 pint to 2 gallons. To prevent putrefaction coagulation must be effected within about 24 hours after the collection of the milk. The resulting mass was then made into round flat cakes, which were exported under the name "sheet rubber"

[illegible] Picture Writings and Other Documents. Comparative Ethnographical Studies, vol. 7, part 1 (1928) and part 2 (1930).

(Spanish "torta" or "plancha"). The milk, adhering to the cuts made into the bark, blackened upon exposure to the sun and air; it was left to coagulate there, and then wrapped up in bundles separate from the other rubber. This was shipped mostly to New York, where it was known as "scrap rubber" or "picket rubber" (Spanish "burucha," the "sernamby" of the Brazilians). In later years the spot at the foot of the rubber tree was cleared and the milky juice was allowed to drop to the ground, taking its own time to coagulate. After a couple of weeks, when it was sufficiently dry, it was rolled up and made into bundles varying from 50 to 200 pounds in weight. This is the "strip rubber" of commerce (Spanish "tira" or "cuera"). 314

When this industry started in 1860 large rubber trees from 4 to 5 feet in diameter were not uncommon. These yielded, when first cut, about 20 gallons of milk, each gallon of which furnished 2 pounds of rubber. After an ordinary bleeding the tree soon recuperates, and may be tapped again the following year. Unscrupulous collectors merely felled the tree in order to facilitate the work. By this pernicious method large trees have been made to yield over a quintal of rubber, but gradually all the big trees were killed and even specimens measuring 3 feet in diameter became rare. Many huleros then adulterated the rubber with the latex derived from the tunu tree; the resulting mixture being less elastic, and consequently of inferior quality, the product from the Mosquito Coast yielded a lower price than that from other regions of Central America.

Previous to 1860 rubber was collected in thick circular cakes, which were used only to make black paint from the melted gum.

MANUFACTURE OF BARK CLOTH

In the northern part of the Mosquito Coast a coarse brownish cloth is pounded from the inner bark of a tree closely related to the rubber tree (*Castilla* sp.). The cloth, as the tree itself, is known throughout the country by the Miskito name *tunu*,[illegible] while the Twahka and Panamaka call the tree *tikam*, and the finished product *amat*.[illegible] The tree does not grow in the region inhabited by the Ulwa, and these Indians use the bark of the rubber tree (*tas*) for the manufacture of bark cloth, which they call *tas-butna* "pounded rubber." 287

Uses of bark cloth.—Nowadays bark cloth is made almost exclusively into "sheets" or "blankets" for the bed, and into loin cloths (M.: *psipura*; T., P.: *suk-sto*; U.: *asi*). In former days it furnished the clothing for rich and poor, although the gala dress, of men of rank at least, appears to have been of cotton.

[illegible] This name is already found by M. W. (307, 308) in the form *tuno*.

[illegible] *Amatl* or *quauhamatl* is the Mexican name for a species of fig, the bark of which was made into paper and clothing.

287 PREPARATION OF TUNU CLOTH.—The tunu tree is cut down and deprived of its bark; the latter is then soaked in water for a few days, after which the sticky gum or milk adhering to it is scraped off. The bark is then dried in the sun and kept in the hut until the women find time to pound it into cloth. In this state it is called *kueni* by the Miskito, Twahka, and Panamaka, and *kusku* by the Ulwa. As it becomes hard and shrinks considerably, it has to be submerged in the neighboring stream for a short time before the pounding of it begins. The latter operation is performed on a small log [33] (M.: *tus-dusa*; S.: *lañlañ*) with the aid of a wooden mallet having the shape of a short thick club, into which longitudinal ridges have been made at the head part. This mallet is known by the names *kahka* and *para*, after the two small species of palm, from the stem of which it is made.[34] The Miskito living around Brus Lagoon and on the lower Rio Patuca also make use of the stem of a small fan-leafed palm which grows in that region and is known to Indians and foreigners by the name "palmetto." The bark extends gradually upon being pounded, and it becomes soft and flexible. After being washed and dried, it is ready for use, and has a brownish color. In Oceania the same process is employed and a similarly shaped mallet is used to manufacture the bark cloth, known by the name "tapa," but the tree of these regions is a species of Morus.

WHITE BARK CLOTH.—A similar cloth, but almost white in color and of superior quality, is obtained by the same process from the inner bark of a species of Ficus (S.: *yakuta*, *yakanta*) and likewise from the rubber tree (*Castilla* sp.). But in both cases the manufacture of the cloth is more laborious. The cloth from these two trees is known
[754] locally as "white tunu" (M.: *tunu pihni*; S.: *yakanta*, *tas-banna*); it is used by the sorcerer in connection with incantations. For this purpose the sukya marks it with designs in black and red obtained with the aid of clay, charcoal, or vegetable juices.

Raveneau de Lussan (439) mentions the manufacture by the Miskito of clothing and covers from the "bastard palm"; the present writer ignores what kind of tree is meant thereby, as no part of any palm is utilised nowadays for such a purpose.

CERAMICS

323 Pottery making is rapidly becoming a lost art among the Sumu, owing to the introduction of iron and cheap tinware, while it is entirely unknown to the Miskito of the present day. The Sumu from Rio Bocay have attained some skill in making earthenware of different

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[33] According to Exquemelin (Engl. edit.: 251) the Miskito were pounding their bark cloth upon stones around 1671.

[34] It is not uncommon that the plant, which furnishes the material, gives also the name of the tool.

shapes and sizes for hauling water, storing food and intoxicants, and for cooking purposes.[28] 323

Pottery objects.—The various kinds of pottery vessels used for cooking and for storing liquids are known by the general name *sumi* among the Miskito, and *suba* or *san suba* among the Sumu. Some of the large jars used in fermenting intoxicants reach 4 feet in height. Griddles are unknown to the Miskito; they are called *liwa* (T., P.) and *lawa* (U.). Jugs or water jars are known as *putisa* (M.) and *sutpanak* (S.); a small bowl, which is seen chiefly at the festivals, is called *ukkra* (M.), *sumai* (T., P.) or *ukkara* (U.). Most of these vessels, especially the larger ones, are slightly pointed at the base, so that they have to be placed in a cavity of the mud floor, or they are propped with stones to keep them upright. The fruit of the calabash tree served as an early model for the pottery vessels, and several types recall the shape of that fruit. Tobacco pipes (M.: *twako mina;* S.: *aka pan, aka paña*) are also made to the present day, while pottery whistles have been found in the old burial grounds. 415

Molding.—The making of the pottery is exclusively the work of the women. Potter's clay (M.: *slaubla;* S.: *sau*), noted for its good quality, may be hauled by the Indians from a great distance. The material is broken out of the ground with the aid of a strong, pointed stick. After being cleaned of all foreign particles it is mashed with the hands and mixed with water.[29] The clay is molded by hand, for the potter's wheel, like any other kind of wheel, was unknown in America in pre-Columbian days. Smaller vessels are shaped directly out of a lump of clay placed on a heavy wooden board upon which a large bijagua leaf has been placed; this leaf is continually turned round in the process of shaping. 323

In case a larger vessel is manufactured, the bottom portion is likewise shaped directly out of a lump of clay, and the walls are built up, not of one continuous coil, but of several, each succeeding one adding to the height of the pot. Old broken pottery vessels clearly show the coils by which they were built up.

When the desired height has been reached, the upper edge is neatly trimmed with the aid of the fragment of a calabash shell, wherein an indentation has been made, corresponding to the contour the vessel is to receive. When the latter is partly dried, it is polished with the aid of a smooth pebble.

Firing.—After having been allowed to dry slowly in the shade for several days the ware is placed in a fire made on the ground in

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[28] The present-day Miskito rely entirely on the more convenient and durable iron cooking pots for cooking purposes, but they still obtain, by way of trade from their Sumu neighbors, large clay vessels for the storing of mishla.

[29] Wickham (s: 207) mentions the Ulwa of Rio Escondido tempering the clay by mixture with a proportion of ashes from the bark of a certain forest tree, collected and burned for the purpose.

323 the neighborhood of the hut, where it is left to burn slowly, until all
the wood and coals have been consumed. Neither paint, glass, nor
plastic ornamentation is applied nowadays.

ANCIENT POTTERY VESSELS.—The pottery objects found in many
323 parts of the Mosquito Coast, chiefly in old burial grounds, indicate
172 a much greater skill in this art than that possessed by the present-
day inhabitants of the country. Most of such ware is unpainted,
531 but fine plastic ornamentation was applied to the knob handles and
occasionally to the legs also. The designs represent chiefly heads of
jaguars, alligators, turtles, and birds. Fragments of tripod vessels
with legs modified into animal legs may also be found; sometimes
these legs are hollow and contain clay balls as rattlers. In the shell
mounds or kitchen middens near the sea fragments of pottery vessels
with figurine handles have been discovered. A geometric motive,
which is often found on old pottery vessels and on stonework, is the
incised guilloche or rope pattern, which may have a curvilinear or
an angular construction.

ANCIENT CLAY MASKS.—From the interior of the Mosquito Coast,
172 probably the Sumu territory, the discovery of human heads, busts or
532 entire figures, made of clay, has been reported. The material used
for this purpose is said to have been mixed occasionally with gold
dust. These objects are supposed to be the likenesses of chiefs or other
prominent persons who had been buried at the spots where these
finds were made. A number of these "masks" were brought to
England from the interior of the Mosquito Coast about the year 1775,
and eight of them have been described and depicted by Rogers (107).
As these masks have their backs concaved in a cylindrical form,
they were probably parts of sepulchral urns.

COTTON TEXTILES

248 CULTIVATION OF COTTON.—The art of weaving has not been
mastered by the young generation, but cotton (*Gossypium* sp.; M.:
wahmuk; S.: *wahmak*) is still cultivated in a desultory way. The
bushes, which attain a height of from 8 to 12 feet, may be found in
the neighborhood of almost every hut; they flower the whole year
round, and at any time buds and open bolls may be found on the same
plant.

A FEMALE OCCUPATION.—Dyeing and spinning cotton and weaving
286 it into cloth is exclusively woman's work. Exquemelin (Fr. edit.:
462 II, 269), who wrote during the second half of the seventeenth century,
states that the women only spin the cotton and that the men do the
weaving.

286 TYPES OF FABRICS.—The elder Sumu women still weave cotton
into loin cloths (M.: *polpura;* T. and P.: *dóh;* U.: *ani*), girdles or

[p. 50 A]

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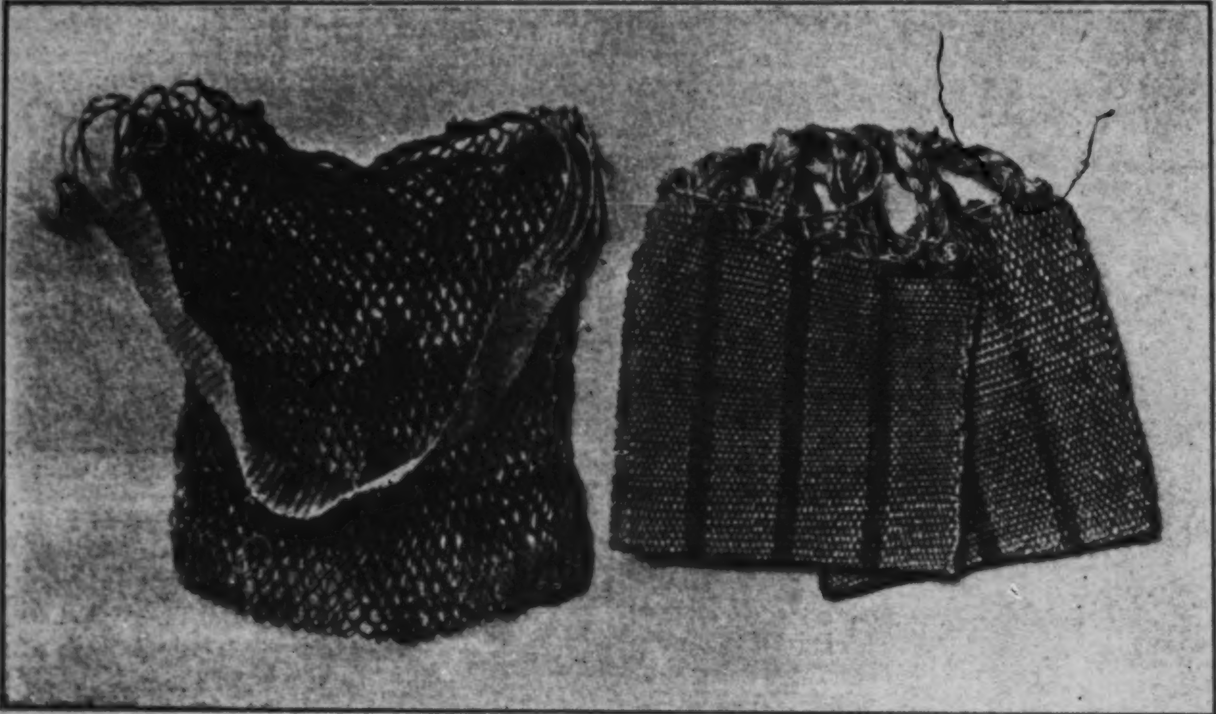

a, Net carrying bag made from the fiber of the pita or silk grass plant. Sumu of Rio Patuca; b, saddlebag made by the hispanized Sumu of upper Rio Grande

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

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1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932

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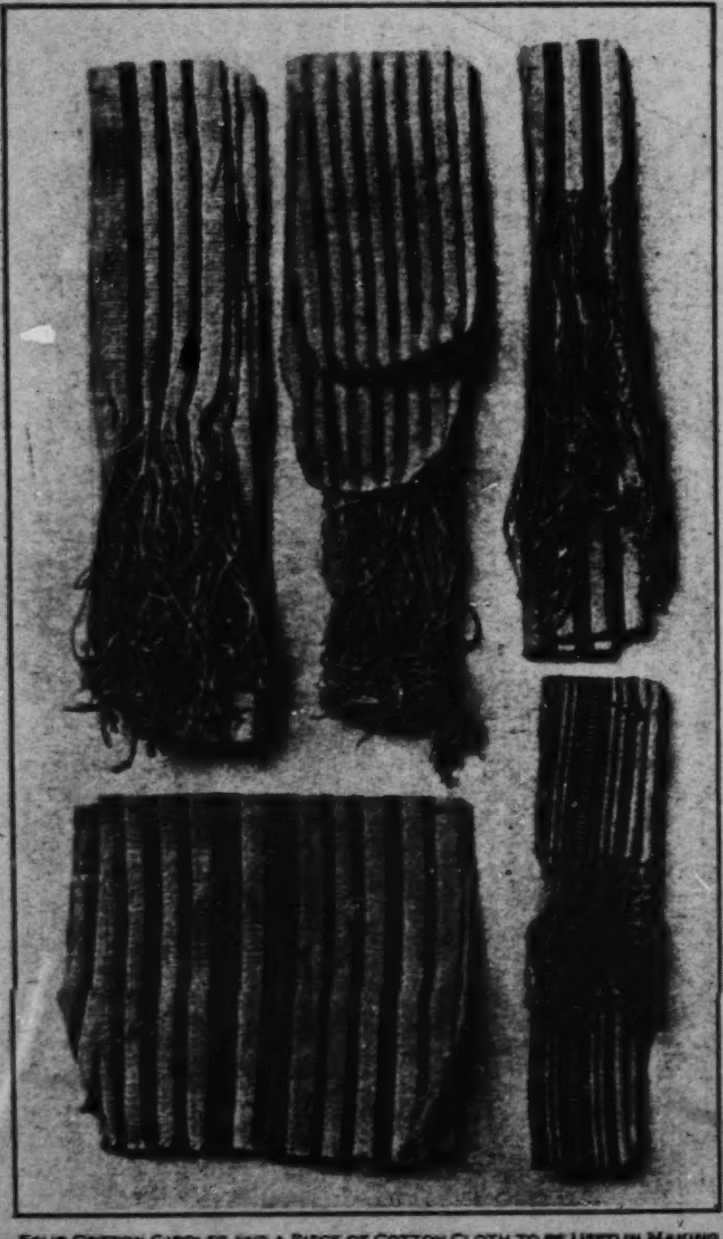

FOUR COTTON GIRDLES AND A PIECE OF COTTON CLOTH TO BE USED IN MAKING A HUNTER'S BAG

Sumu of Rio Bocay and Rio Waspuk.

[p. 50 B]

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932

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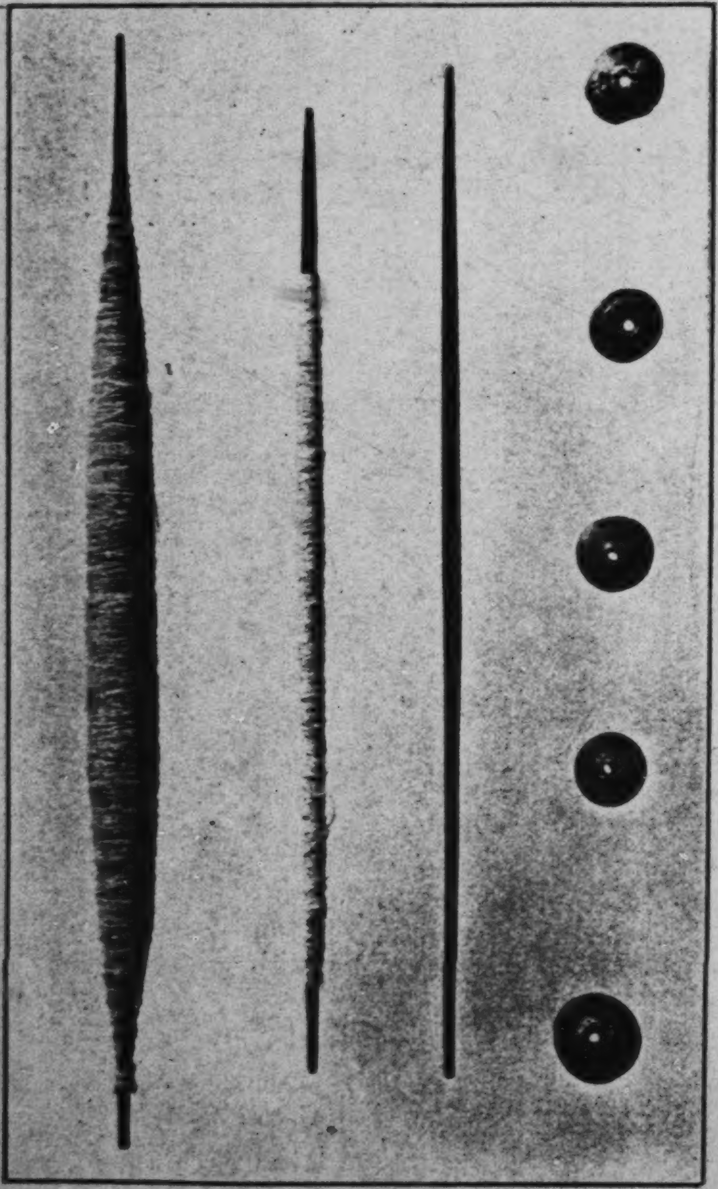

SPINDLES AND SPINDLE WHORLS

Sumu of Rio Bocay and Rio Waspuk.

[p. 50 c]

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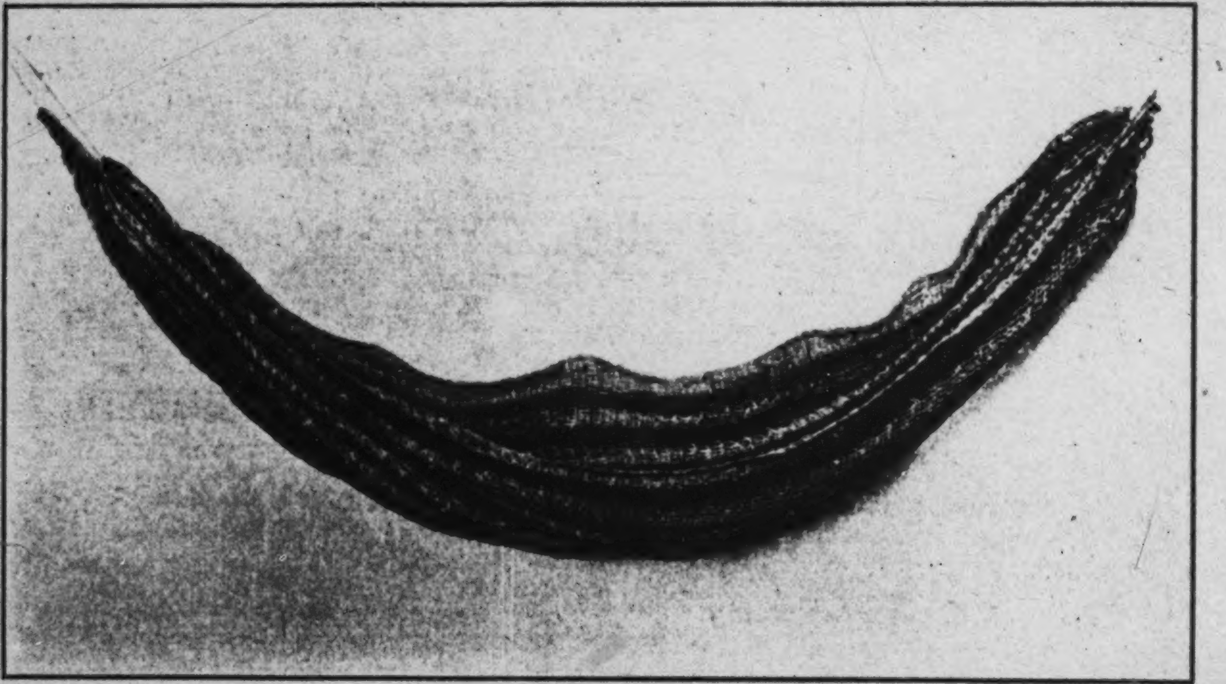
[p. 50 D]



HAMMOCK MADE FROM THE BAST FIBER OF THE SAHI TREE
Miskito of Rio Platano.

sashes (M.: *yalasawa;* S.: *bamakaitna*), hammocks (M.: *silmika;* 286
S.: *wah*), and into shot bags or hunter's bags (M. and S.: *malipuk*). The long sleeveless garment, called *wipal* by the Miskito and *kiñkura* by the Sumu, is not made any longer. All these cotton textiles, although coarse in texture, are soft to the touch. They are of excellent quality and the patterns are always inwoven. Sometimes a fringe of the white down of the muscovy duck extends all round the selvage. According to Exquemelin (Engl. edit.: 251) bed sheets were also made of cotton in former days by the Miskito.

SPINDLE.—The spindle (M.: *blakat;* S.: *malkat, malakat*)[37] consists 283
of a shank made from the hard wood of the pejivalle palm. It measures from 1 to 1½ feet in length and tapers to a point on both ends. The whorl or fly is inserted at about 2 inches from the lower extremity, and the whole presents the appearance of a gigantic top. The whorl is usually made of a rare, very hard and heavy marblelike rock, which occurs in different colors and is called *kupa* by the Indians. Turtle or tortoise shell, manatee bone, clay seeds, and even heavy wood are also employed occasionally for this purpose. The shape of the whorl varies considerably; most commonly it is of conical form. The largest diameter varies from 1 to 1½ inches, and the height from three-quarters of an inch to 1 inch.

SPINNING.—A very curious method is used to spin (M.: *blakaya, bitikaya;* T. and P.: *wilnin, wilnini;* U.: *tihnaka*). A cotton thread, drawn by the left hand of the operator from a pile which she is holding in her lap, is attached to the spindle a little above the whorl. The spindle is placed in a calabash and is made to revolve very rapidly by means of the thumb and forefinger of the right hand. With each twirling movement the spindle is kept in rotation for about half a minute by the momentum of the whorl, during which time the operator is continually drawing out cotton thread, which is then wound on the spindle. This process is repeated until the spindle is full.

WEAVING.—The cotton thread is woven (M.: *lukaya;* T.: *kilnin;* 286
P.: *[illegible];* U.: *dakaaka*) on a horizontal loom (M.: *slabin;* S.: *slabin,* 171
[illegible]) of most simple construction and similar to the one shown on the Mexican Codices, and still used by the Maya and other Central American tribes. It consists of a cloth beam and a yarn beam, which are connected to each other by the warp. The yarn beam is attached to a house post, about 6 feet from the ground, while the cloth beam is attached round the back of the weaver by a thick cord, enabling her to tighten the warp at will by merely leaning backward. The completed material is rolled up at the lower end. Looms of similar technique are also found in South America and Oceania.

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[37] Cf. Mexican malacatl.

OTHER HANDICRAFTS

283 **Bark fibers.**—From various trees known locally as "mahoe" or "majagua" (M. and S.: *sani*, *wahpi*, *wahmatis*, *tšilu*) the Indians obtain strong bark fiber (M.: *sani;* S.: *wahso*). The best fiber from these trees is pulled off, split, cut into many threads of the desired size and made into ropes and cordage, hammocks (M.: *silmika;* S.: *wah*), matates or carrying bags (M.: *kŭa;* T., P.: *wili;* U.: *wali*). These articles are colored with native bark dyes. The carrying bags are of various sizes and consist of coiled work without foundation; they are furnished with a head strap woven of one piece with the bag.

Bast fiber is also the common tying material of the Indians, and a supply thereof may always be found in the huts. It is also used as pack straps, which are put around the forehead and support the load carried on the back.

Pita fiber.—Pita or silk-grass fiber (M.: *kara;* S.: *awa*) is employed for similar uses as bast fiber, and the articles made from it are practically indestructible. It is also made into fishlines, fish nets, and bowstrings, and used to repair shoes. Its extraction is very laborious. The pulpy covering surrounding the fibers is removed by scraping the surface of the leaf on a flat board with the aid of a machete or heavy iron knife. The fibers, which are thereby exposed, are then loosened and easily pulled from their bed by rubbing them crosswise of the leaf with the leaf pressed down upon the flat board. They are then washed to remove any adhesive pulp, dried, and rolled on the thigh into twine.

285 **Basketry.**—Basketry is not highly developed, although in such a well-watered country as the Mosquito Coast there is no lack of palms, vines, creepers, and epiphytic plants which may be used in basketwork. Certain vines are used in tying material, especially in the construction of the dwellings. The carrying bag of bark fiber or pita fiber takes to a large extent the place of baskets. From *wari* withes is made a round basket (M. and S.: *ualun*, *usnuñ*), which is used to store calabashes and other small kitchen utensils. Other types made by the Sumu are called by these Indians *wah-tšîna* and *sidan*. A large waterproof basket, known locally by the name *pataki*, is obtained in trade from the Black Carib; it is made from *sisoa* withes.

281 177 **Leather work.**—The art of tanning has apparently been learned from the whites. The bark of numerous indigenous trees is used by the Indians for tanning purposes. Leather is used nowadays for drumheads, masquerade dresses, sandals, moccasins, crude saddles, and belts.

383 **Rubber industry.**—Some of the Indians have learned the process of hardening the milk of the rubber tree (*Castilla* sp.) by treating

313 it with sulphur. They apply a thin coat of the milk on cloth for the making of waterproof traveling bags, hunter's bags, and ponchos or raincoats. This industry is, however, chiefly in the hands of the Ladinos.

322 531 WOOD CARVING.—Wooden stools (M.: *sulati;* T., P.: *sini;* U.: *panba*), carved with the machete and the adze from a solid block of wood, are in universal use. In olden times these stools had three well-centered, elaborately decorated legs and a beautiful bird or animal head, reminding much of the metates which are occasionally found in the ancient sites.

[293 177] Formerly a sort of walking stick or scepter of hard wood, surmounted by a carved human head, was an insignium of office and authority, but this custom has been introduced apparently by the English or Spanish, as there is no native name for it. Similar sticks now belong to the outfit of the Miskito sukya.

The central house post of the old-fashioned Sumu hut was also elaborately carved. The art was also practiced on various wooden domestic implements, as for instance the large wooden spoons (M.: *kustara;* T., P.: *pan-yamna;* U.: *kusaro*) and the cradles (M.: *kuhsañ;* T., P.: *pala;* U.: *lim*). Wood carvings generally represent animal or human heads, or geometric figures, rarely floral designs. At the festivals of the dead celebrated by the Miskito headdresses carved into animal or human heads are sometimes worn.

415 531 ENGRAVED CALABASHES.—The common calabashes (M.: *kahmi, kami;* S.: *sutak*) of the Miskito and Sumu are often engraved with simple geometric designs, such as triangles, circles, zigzag lines, parallelograms, which recall those used in tattooing, on pottery vessels and painted tunu cloth, or the ones found on the large river bowlders. According to the Indians, however, these are merely impromptu inventions and serve no other purpose but that of identifying their calabashes. An elaborately carved and painted calabash, obtained from a Sumu chief of Rio Bocay, has been described and depicted by Sapper (*f*, 206–210).

301 BEADWORK.—The women of both tribes are very clever in making pretty bead ornaments of various colors to be worn around neck, wrist, below the knee, and above the ankle; the men also occasionally use them as watch fobs and as hatbands. The designs are chiefly animal, especially of snakes. Two patterns of beadwork have been [532] pictured by Sapper (a, 274), one representing paddle handles, the other the skin of the *rikaya* salamander. The Indians utilize small [439] glass beads (M.: *bilyura;* T., P.: *ala;* U.: *tasañka*), which they obtain from the foreign traders. The colors preferred are green, blue, black, and white, while red, brown, and yellow are only sparingly used. Fellechner (137), however, states that the blue beads are not liked by the Miskito and that the red and yellow ones are preferred by

53 them. White thread and small needles (M.: *silak;* T., P.: *silip;* U.: *akusa,* from Spanish "aguja") of foreign manufacture are employed to string the beads. [439]

NAVIGATION AND CANOE MAKING

494 Travel is effected chiefly by canoe, for there are hardly any roads in the country outside of the hunting trails; the numerous navigable rivers intersecting the country form, together with the lagoons and the sea, the means of communication.

The Miskito inhabiting the immediate seashore from Cabo Gracias a Dios on southward are excellent seamen; they were already noted for their courage on the sea by the buccaneers (Raveneau de Lussan: 440). The Miskito living to the north of that settlement, however, navigate the lagoons and rivers, and rarely venture on the sea. The Indians living inland, on the other hand, are afraid of the sea and of the large lagoons, but they are perfectly at home in the bush, and they are very expert in navigating the river boats through the dangerous falls and rapids.

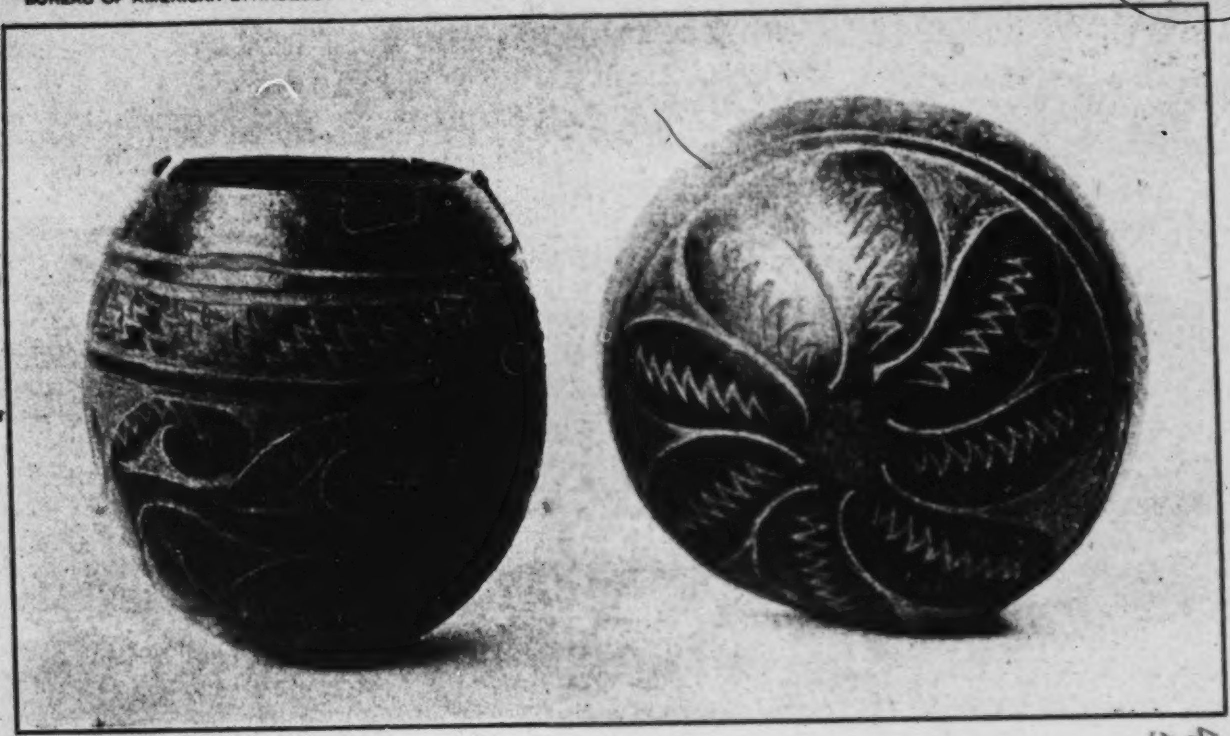
491 **Bridges.**—The liana bridges, which are met with in other parts of Central America, are unknown on the Mosquito Coast. The Miskito and Sumu occasionally make a crude bridge over a narrow creek by felling a tree across it. Canoes are used everywhere for the crossing of the streams.

501 **Types of canoes.**—Two sorts of dugout canoes are used on the Mosquito Coast. The "dori," or keeled canoe, is used to navigate the sea and lagoons, while the "pitpan," or flat-bottomed canoe, is employed on the rivers. The sea canoes are fast sailors, but somewhat "cranky." All these boats are hollowed out by means of the adze; the largest specimens, cut out of the solid tree, without any addition, may reach up to 5 feet beam and 40 feet in length.

Pitpan.—The "pitpan" is a long narrow boat with flat bottom, drawing but little water; it is therefore particularly fitted to navigate the shallow creeks of the interior which abound in rapids and falls. It glides noiselessly over the water and is easily steered, but it is very cranky and the slightest motion renders it liable to upset. It is therefore of no use on the sea. The pitpan has a square projecting bow and stern, like a small platform, large enough for a person to stand on. A hole is made in the bow through which a pole is thrust perpendicularly in the ground, to moor at river banks or at shoals. The pitpan is very thick bottomed, and for that reason may sustain very rough handling in hauling it over the rocks at rapids and falls.

The name "pitpan," which is in general use among the English-speaking population of eastern Central America, is taken from the Miskito word *pitban,* which means plaited. It is claimed by some

[p. 54 A]



DECORATED CALABASH VESSELS

Sumu of upper Rio Grande.

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1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
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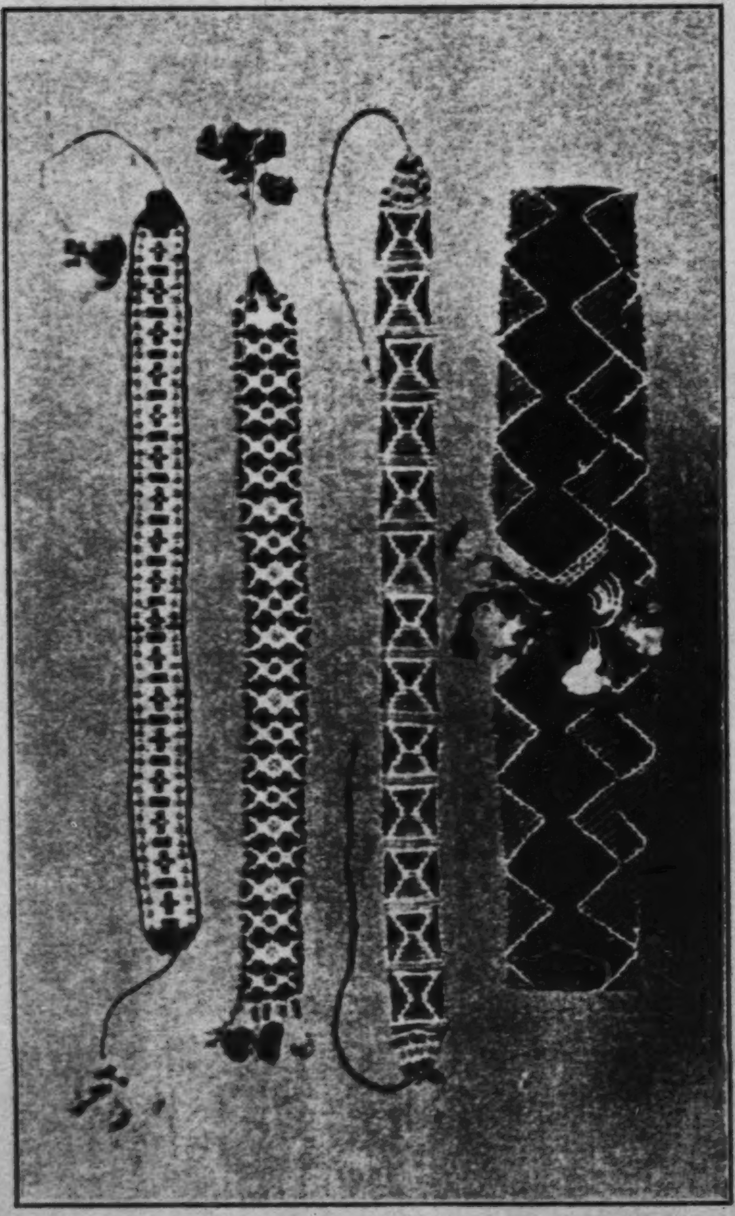

BEADWORK

Miskito and Sumu of Rio Coco.

[p. 54 B]

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932

SA15 Mosquito SA15

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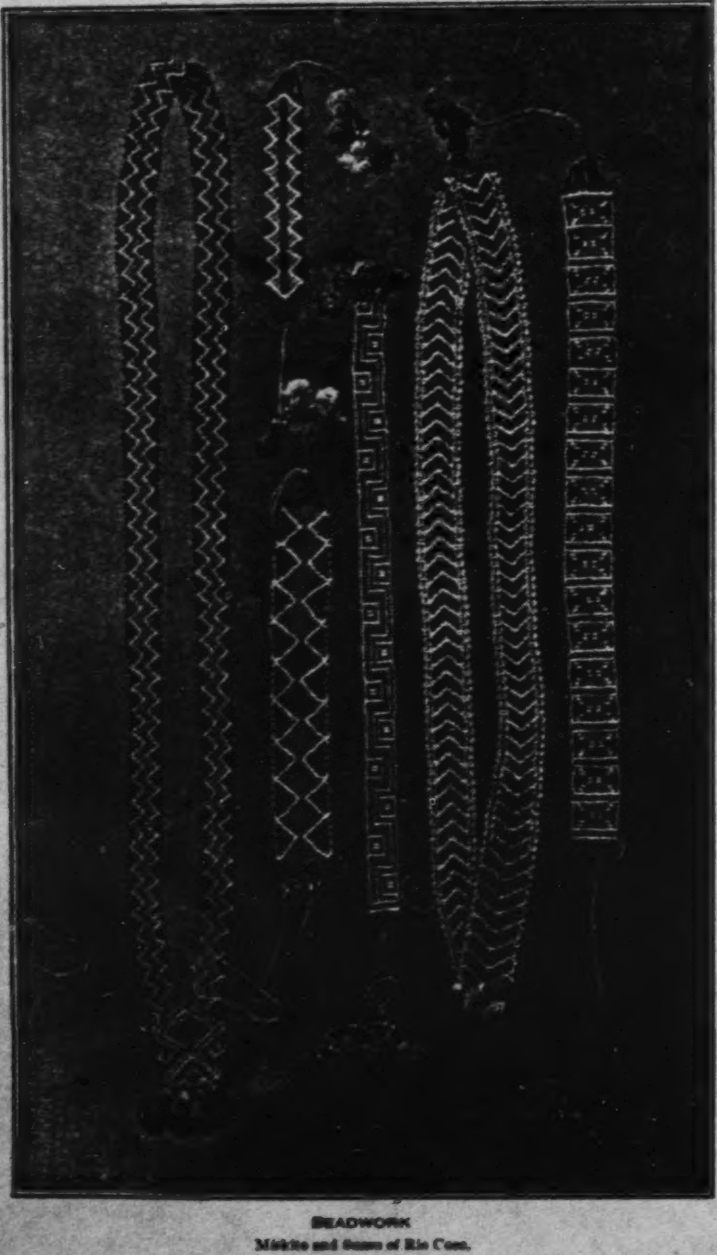

BEADWORK

Miskito and Sumu of Rio Coco.

[p. 54 C]

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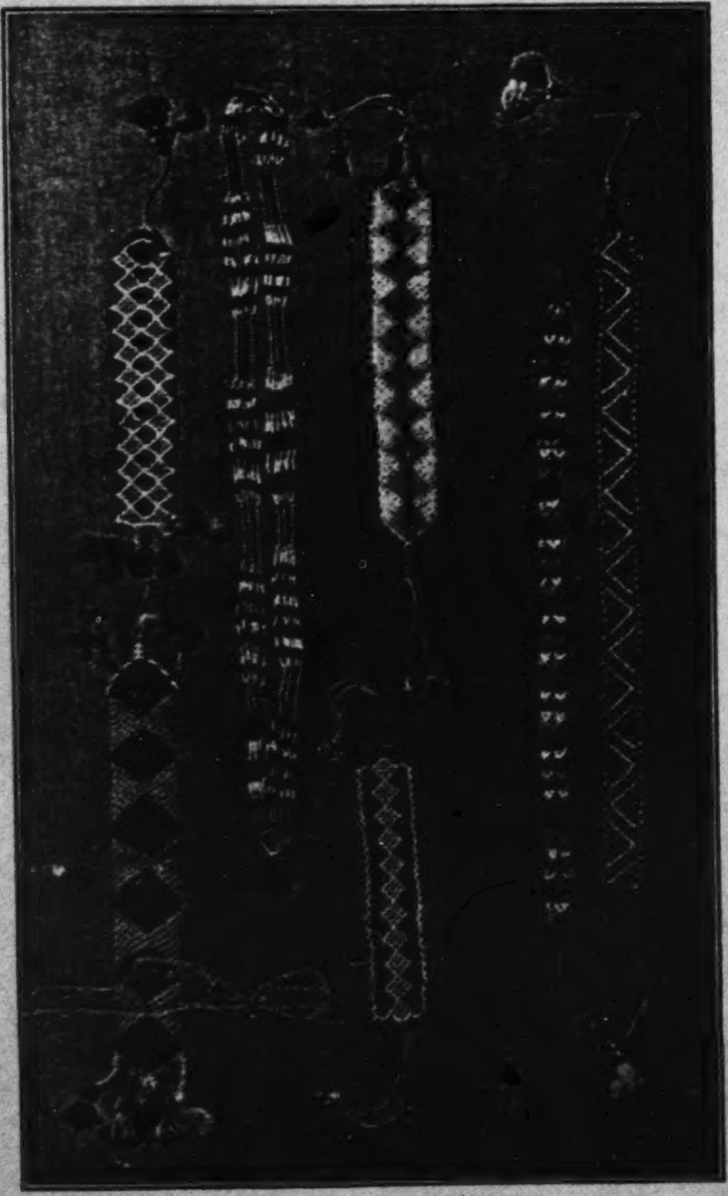

BEADWORK
Miskito and Sumu of Rio Coco

[p. 54D]

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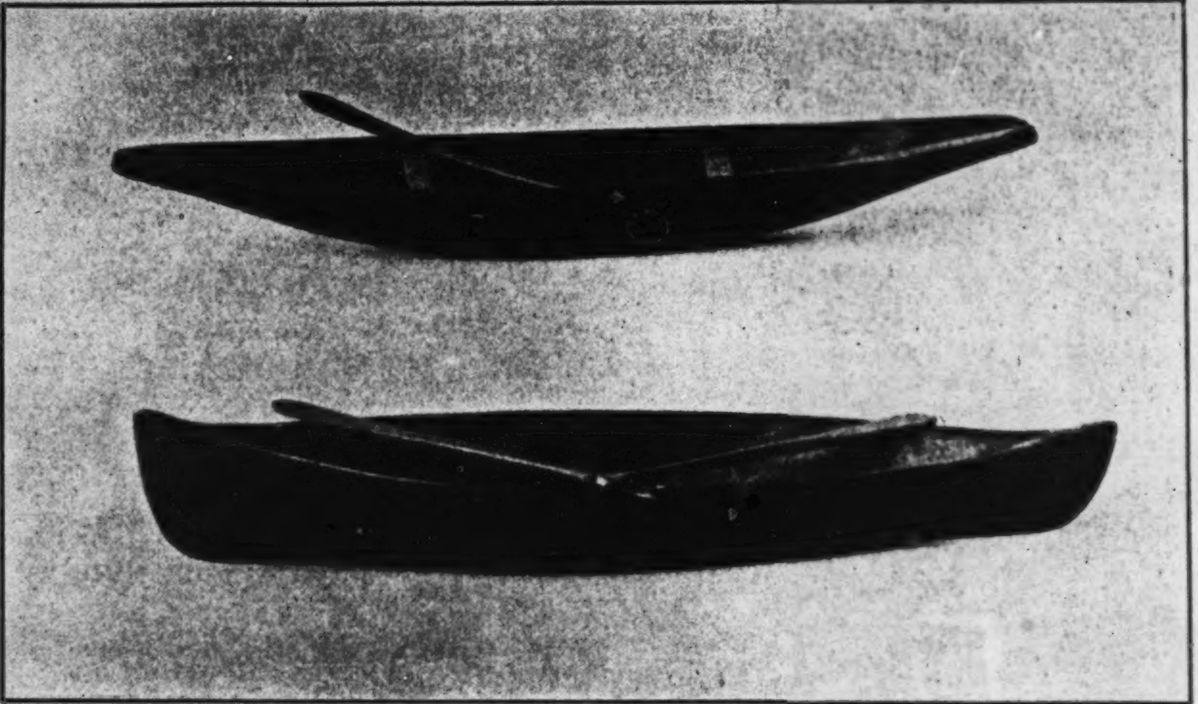

UPPER, MODEL OF "PITPAN," A FLAT-BOTTOMED CANOE FOR RIVER NAVIGATION; LOWER, MODEL OF "DORI," A KEELED CANOE FOR SEA AND LAGOON NAVIGATION

Sumu of lower Rio Escondido.

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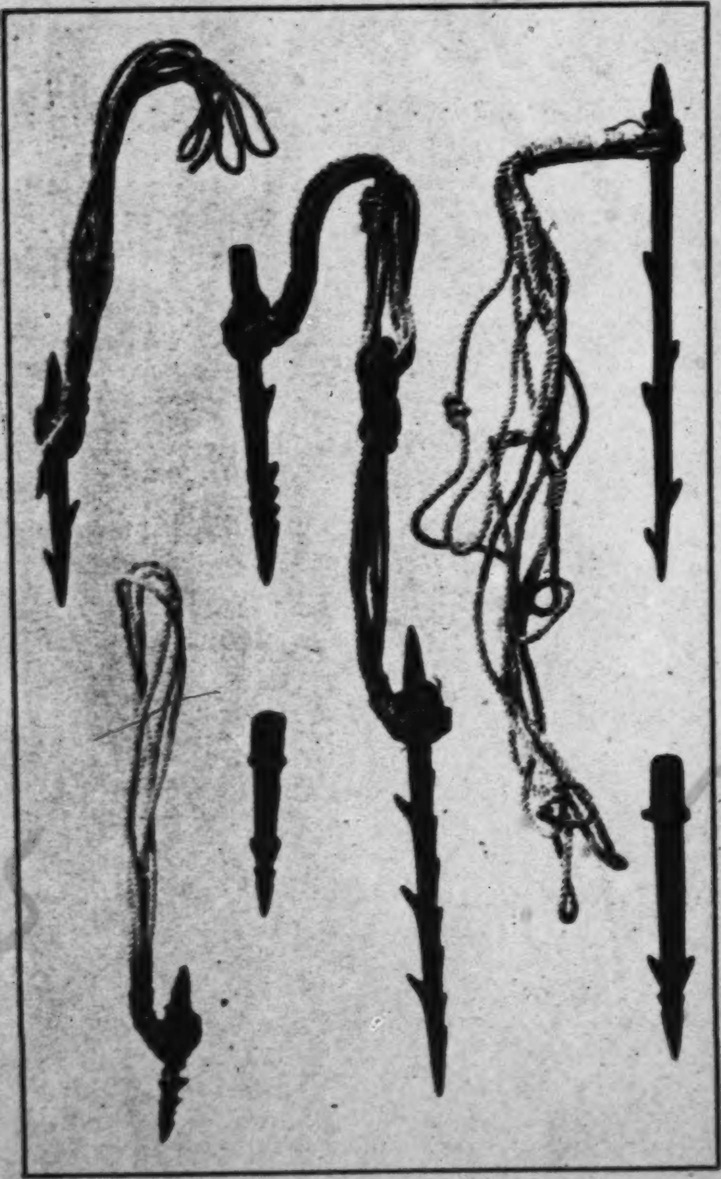
1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932

SA15 Mosquito SA15



HARPOONS MADE FROM TRIANGULAR FILES

Miskito.

[P.54 F]

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932

SA15 Mosquito SA15

that in former days the Miskito made rude canoes of plaited withes and made them waterproof by smearing a thin layer of clay over them. The Ladinos have corrupted the name into "pipante." The Miskito of the upper Rio Coco, who know no other boat but the pitpan, apply the name *dori* or *duri* nowadays to a keeled or unkeeled canoe, but among their kindred living near the sea this word is restricted to the former type. In all Sumu dialects both types are called *kuriñ*. 501

Bateau.—A large form of pitpan, known by the French name "bateau," is generally used to transport cargo on the rivers of the Mosquito Coast. It is made by enlarging an ordinary pitpan. The latter is cut lengthwise in two halves of equal size; boards are then inserted, and the two parts are joined again. The sides are also raised. Such bateaux are generally manned by six paddlers and take about 5,000 pounds of freight. On some of the larger rivers there are operating some bateaux measuring up to 60 feet in length, 4 to 6 feet in width, and taking up to 100 Spanish quintals (say, 4,600 kg., or 10,145 English pounds) of merchandise. These are manned by from 10 to 12 Indians. A small cabin or "carroza" for the passengers is made immediately in front of the captain's seat, who steers the boat from the stern with the aid of a gigantic paddle. Such a cabin may be made of canvas cloth or merely of bamboo and large leaves; it affords protection from rain and sunshine.

Making of a dugout.—The manner of cutting trees and hollowing them out in former days was evidently that practiced in other parts of the New World before the arrival of the Spaniards. A ring was made with the stone ax through the bark and base of the tree, thus causing it to dry. Then fire was applied, and the wood was cut away as it charred. This process was repeated until finally the tree was felled. The hollowing out of the stem was also effected by alternately applying fire and the stone ax. Water was always kept at hand in order to quench the fire so as not to waste more wood than was necessary. 396

The width of a dugout is enlarged after it has been filled with water during a number of days; it may then easily be stretched and widened by inserting sticks. In former days rough dugout canoes used to be furnished by some of the Sumu tribes as a sort of tribute to the King of the Miskito.

Trees used in canoe making.—Following is a list of the various trees which are made into canoes by the Indians under consideration: 396 884

Mahogany (M. and S.: *yulu*; *Swietenia macrophylla* King) is the tree most commonly used, as it is very abundant on the Mosquito Coast; canoes from this wood are very durable, but rather heavy, and they are often attacked by boring worms.

Cedar (M.: *yulam, wiñkur*; S.: *suhen, wiñkur*; *Cedrela* sp.). Canoes hollowed out from this tree are very light and comparatively du-

396 rable; the wood splits easily, but it has the advantage of not being subject to the attack of worms.

824 The guanacaste tree (M. and S.: *tuburus; Enterolobium cyclocarpum* Griseb.) is the one preferred by the Black Carib for the making of canoes; they allow the tree to "season" on the ground for a few months before starting to hollow it out. The wood is as light as cedar.

From the silk cotton tree (M.: *sisin;* S.: *panya, paniki; Ceiba pentandra* Gaertn.) very large dugouts may be made, but its light, whitish wood is not durable. Owing to certain superstitions regarding this tree, it is rarely used in boat making. (See Religion, etc.)

Sebu (M.: *swa;* S.: *saba; Carapa guianensis* Aubl. or *Guarea caoba* C. DC.). The wood from this tree can scarcely be distinguished from mahogany in color and general appearance, but it is less durable.

Santa Maria (M. and S.: *krasa; Calophyllum brasiliense* var.) is seldom used, and it is suitable only for small canoes, as the tree does not attain such a great size as the aforementioned varieties. The wood is very durable, but it is rather heavy.

Emery (*Vochysia hondurensis* Sprague) is occasionally made into dugouts in the southern section of the Mosquito Coast. The wood resembles that of the silk cotton, but it is more lasting. It has, however, the disadvantage of soon becoming water-logged; besides, it rots immediately where a nail has been driven in.

The banak or cebo tree (M. and S.: *banak; Virola merendonis* ?) is a large tree which is also occasionally made into canoes.

501 CANOE POLES.—Canoes are propelled by long poles or by paddles. The poles (M.: *kahra, kahara;* T.: *kaha pan;* P.: *kaha pana, kuriñ pana;* U.: *pan sañ*) are used in shallow water with rapid current and hard bottom. In a small "cranky" pitpan this method of travel is not agreeable, especially to a newcomer; each time the boatmen, who stand up at the bow, push with their poles, the canoe begins to lurch as if it was going to upset. The captain sits at the stern and steers with a paddle.

PADDLES.—The paddles (M.: *kwahi;* T. and P.: *kawañ;* U.: *wañhna*) are broad bladed and made generally of mahogany or cedar. They measure from 4 to 5 feet in length and are often roughly polished. Larger paddles are also used, especially by the steersman, for the propelling of the bateaux. At its upper extremity the paddle terminates into an enlargement or "ear" (M.: *kyama;* S.: *tapani, tapaka*), which serves as grip to one hand, while the other hand grasps the paddle about 2 feet farther down. The paddles are moved vertically along the gunwale of the boat, the blade forcing back the water with main strength applied and very quick strokes.

SAILS.—In former days the Miskito are known to have employed sails (M.: *kwaltara;* T., P.: *asna nokni;* U.: *asna nohka*[illegible]) of native

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[illegible] These names literally mean "large cloth."

cotton, but this manner of facilitating navigation may have been of European introduction. To-day the Indians make sails from canvas or other imported cloth, and employ them on the sea, lagoons, and the larger rivers. 501

Rafts.—In descending the rivers the Indians also make use of rafts (M.: *puhlak;* T., P.: *pala, dana;* U.: *lim*). They are made by tying a number of balsa stems or other light wood together with the aid of lianas or vegetable fibers. For lack of other light woods at hand, banana stems are sometimes used for this purpose, but these soon become water-logged. The stems are generally half submerged, but on large balsa rafts the natives descend from the interior with heavy cargoes of merchandise or livestock.

Skill and endurance of the Indian boatmen.—Both Miskito and Sumu are remarkable for their skill and endurance as boatmen. They work in a rhythm, and at each thrust all the paddles lightly strike the gunwale of the canoe together. From time to time, at a sign of the bowman, all the paddles are lashed simultaneously with the flat part of the blade upon the surface of the water. 502

The river Indians of the interior are very skillful in the management of the canoes through the falls and rapids of the streams. When proceeding upstream the boat is generally hauled through a side channel, or overland with the aid of strong withes or lianas [29] which are fastened to the hole in the bow. But a greater danger consists in "shooting" the rapids, the canoe rushing with great speed down the crooked channel oversown with projecting rocks. One Indian stands in the bow with a pole balanced in the middle, with which he touches the rocks scattered in the river, in order to guide the dashing pitpan and ward it off from these dangers. Every one is silent and watchful except for the short, sharp words of direction from the bowman to the captain, who is at the stern and assists with the timely stroke of the paddle. If the canoe gets swamped, the Indians jump overboard and, hanging on to it with one hand, they bail out the water with the aid of a calabash.

DOMESTICATION OF ANIMALS AND BIRDS

Indigenous animals.—Many indigenous animals are tamed to keep as pets. Of these the most frequently seen are the capuchin or white-faced monkey (*Cebus* sp.), the spider monkey (*Ateles* sp.), the howling monkey (*Alouatta* sp., syn. *Mycetes* sp.), paca (*Cuniculus* 231

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[29] Many trees are covered with such parasitic vines or lianas which climb up the stem to the branches, from which they hang freely down like ropes in sizes from very thin ones to others measuring up to 2 and even 3 inches in diameter. They are stronger than string or rope and resist the influence of the climate much better.

231 sp.), agouti (*Dasyprocta* sp.), deer (*Odocoileus* sp. and *Mazama* sp.), squash or coati (*Nasua narica*), and raccoon (*Procyon lotor*).

Wickham (b: 163; c: 200) even saw a tame otter among the Ulwa of Rio Escondido. The Indian women have great patience in taming young animals and they will suckle them as they would their own children. These animals are generally caught while still very young.

INDIGENOUS BIRDS.—The domestic turkey is now found in almost every hut. Among the other native birds which are usually tamed by the Indians are the following: curassow (*Crax* sp.), guan (*Penelope* sp.), mountain hen (*Tinamus* sp.), muscovy duck (*Cairina moschata*), macaw (*Ara* sp.), parrot (*Chrysotis* sp.), parrakeet (*Conurus* sp.), toucan (*Ramphastos* sp. and *Pteroglossus* sp.).

The birds are taken out of the nest while still young, but old birds are occasionally tamed. When slightly wounded or when shot with a blunt arrow they are carried home and kept for a few days without any food. After that they become generally very docile and are ready to eat the food given to them.

NATIVE BEES.—Various species of the native stingless bees are
231 occasionally found in a semidomesticated state around the Indian
263 huts. About a dozen species are found in the country, all belonging to the family of the Meliponidae. The largest of them is about the size of the European bee. The honey cells are circular and the honey is yellow and slightly acidulous in taste; it does not crystallize when kept for some time, as is the case with that of the European bee. It is slightly laxative and is generally diluted with water, either fresh or after having been allowed to ferment. Previous to the introduction of sugar-cane, honey was used to sweeten food. The wax, which is
231 light brown in color, is used as "cement" in the making of arrows, spears, and other implements; in certain regions it is also used for lighting purposes. The Indians also collect the honey from the bee
222 nests in the forests and store it in large bamboo joints.

DOMESTIC ANIMALS OF FOREIGN ORIGIN.—The most common domes-
231 tic animals are the dog, pig, cattle, and fowl, while the horse, cat, goat,
177 and sheep are rarely seen. All these animals are of foreign origin and have been introduced from the interior of Honduras and Nicaragua. Among the Indians they are known almost invariably by their Spanish or English name.[*] When the Indian family travels all the livestock is taken along.

231 CATTLE.—COWS (M.: *bip*, from the English "beef"; S.: *toro*, from the Spanish *toro* "bull") are owned by many Indians, especially those living in the savannas. They feed on the coarse grass, there being no artificial pastures made by the Indians. The cows are rarely

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[*] The Ulwa, however, call the cow and the horse by the native names they apply to deer (*sana*) and tapir (*pamka*), as do a number of other tribes in Central and South America.

milked, their owners being unwilling to "rob" the calf, but the meat is esteemed. 231

Horses.—Horses (M.: *aras*, from the English "horse") are not common, while mules and donkeys are conspicuous by their absence. 231
The horse is sometimes used as a riding animal by the savanna Indians, but loads are transported either by canoe or on man's back. 492
The Indians ride bareback and use a sort of bridle consisting of a rope made from bark fiber, which is tied loosely round the lower jaw, leaving two ends for reins. When swimming the horse in deep water, the rider gets off its back, at the upside in case of a running stream, and swims beside the animal, holding on by its mane. As soon as the horse touches bottom he gets on again. The manner employed in breaking a young horse is very simple. One man leads it with a rope into the water, to a depth of 3 or 4 feet. Then another man quickly jumps upon its back, whereupon the frightened animal begins to buck and skit. After a while it is completely exhausted and docile.

Pigs.—Pigs (M. and T.: *kwirku*, from the Spanish "puerco"; P. and U.: *kusi*, from the local Spanish "cuche") were already found occasionally among the Miskito at the end of the seventeenth century (M. W.: 310). 231
Pork is rarely eaten by the Indians, and fattened hogs are sold to the foreigners and Ladinos. [439]
Little care is given to these animals; they are left to roam around and find a large part of their food themselves. At night they are kept in a pen adjoining the dwelling, or they are brought inside and tied to a post on account of the various felines preying upon them.

Fowl.—The domestic fowl (M.: *kalila*, from the Spanish "gallina") is found in every house. 235
It is esteemed chiefly on account of the crowing power of the cock, which serves as a clock at night. The Miskito had already some fowls at the end of the seventeenth century (M. W.: 310). Among the Sumu this bird is called *sakara* and *katarama*; these appear to be onomatopoeic names, and similar terms are met with in other parts of Central and South America.

Dogs.—In every Indian dwelling there roam about some sneaky, 231
repulsive curs, ready to steal if they are left unwatched for an instant. They are kept as pets, as watch dogs, but above all, for the chase. Good hunting dogs, especially such as are trained to hunt the jaguar or the puma, are very highly valued. The Indians feed them but little, fearing that they will lose all interest in hunting. The dogs are therefore very lean and the bones of the long, thin body generally appear distinctly beneath the skin. They roam about the house during the night and make their lair at the foot of that of their masters; they are responsible for the bloodthirsty fleas which abound in the Indian dwellings.

231 According to Belt (204) the Sumu living on the upper Rio Grande used to come periodically to the Spanish settlements in order to
439 obtain dogs. They would barter a gun or a large iron pot for a single dog, if it was of the right color. Some Ladinos around Olama had even in those days commenced to rear dogs to supply the demand. These Indians had a special liking for black ones, and did not value those of any other color so much. Lehmann (c: I, 405) states that
[764] the Miskito formerly buried a red dog (*páuan*) with a dead person, in order to serve the latter on his voyage to the underworld. However, the writer has never observed that either Sumu or Miskito have a preference for a certain color.

231 There is no record of the former existence on the Mosquito Coast of the "xulo" (xolotl) or barkless dog, which was tamed in the Pacific region of Nicaragua at the time of the conquest. The native names of the common dog (M.: *yul;* S.: *sul*, *sulu*, *solo*) bear a close affinity to that Nahuatl word. Allen has identified the barkless dog in question with the raccoon, which is, however, called *suksuk* by both Miskito and Sumu.

AGRICULTURE

24 Agriculture is not as highly developed on the Mosquito Coast as in the remainder of Honduras and Nicaragua; it furnishes, nevertheless, the principal means of subsistence.

Preparing the plantation.—In order to make their plantation (M.: *insla;* S.: *yamak*) the Indians cut down a patch of the forest, generally on the bank of a navigable stream. The rough work, that is the felling of the trees and the clearing of the ground, is essentially man's work. The large hardwood trees are usually left standing, but all the other giants of the forest are cut down. This work takes place at the beginning of the dry season, about February or March. Toward the beginning of May fire is set to the tangled mass. When the ground has thus been prepared by the men, the women take charge of the future plantation, the planting and cutting down of the grass and weeds being their occupation. Sometimes the man and wife do the planting together. The harvesting is the work of the females.

The ax, machete, and "barreta" or pointed digging stick are the only agricultural implements. The great heat and moisture with the comparatively uniform temperature all the year round enable a constant succession of vegetation, and trees may bear fruit at all seasons. The soil is in general very fertile, but large areas of the country are covered with savannas with sandy and gravelly soil, which is entirely unfit for cultivation and produces only scanty grass, pines, oaks, and various species of scrubby plants. The Indians from this part of the country are therefore compelled to make their plantations on the edge of the rivers, often at a considerable distance from their villages. 241

Influence of cultivation upon the forest.—The bush, which springs up again from the seeds of the forest trees germinating in the ground, is cut down from time to time. 241 311 After two or three crops have been obtained from the plantation, a variety of weedy-looking shrubs and grass begins to get a hold upon the land. The plantation is then abandoned, as the Indian does not consider it worth while to undertake the great amount of labor needed to keep the ground clear. He prefers to prepare a new plantation (M.: *insla disañ;* S.: *yamak wisam*) by cutting down another patch of the virgin forest, where he is sure of a better crop.

The brushwood springing up in the abandoned plantation (M.: *insla prata;* S.: *yamak ba*), being not interfered with any longer, gradually chokes off the grass and weeds. As a number of the larger hardwood trees had been left standing in the first place, such an abandoned plantation will, after 15 or 20 years, not differ essentially from the surrounding primeval forest. It may then be cut again for the making of a new plantation. As the country is sparsely inhabited, the Indians will always find virgin forest within close distance from their home; besides, many of them are seminomadic and change their village sites from time to time. Were they to make their plantations for a long-continued period on the same spot, cutting down the brushwood again and again, a great change would gradually take place. The soil not containing any more seeds of forest trees, grass and a scrubby vegetation would in time spring up. This may be observed around certain villages, where by this manner the forest has been beaten back, inch by inch, gradually but surely.

Bananas and plantains.—It is noteworthy that the most important food plant of the Sumu and of the Miskito living toward the interior, 246 [171] the banana (M.: *siksa;* S.: *wakisa, pasa, iñkini*), is not indigenous to America. It was apparently brought by the Spaniards from the Canary Islands during the early part of the discovery, first to Santo Domingo (Haiti), and from there to the mainland. According to the testimony of the buccaneers of the latter part of the seventeenth century, bananas and plantains were already cultivated in those days by the Miskito of Cabo Gracias a Dios. Raveneau de Lussan (429) saw in 1688 many bananas on the banks of Rio Coco, and states that they had been planted by the Albaotins (= Sumu) and by the river currents. He also found this plant cultivated by the Mulattoes living around Cabo Gracias a Dios (438). Dampier (I, 9–10) mentions plantains among the Miskito, but he does not say anything about bananas. Exquemelin (English edit.: 114, 251), on the other hand, who visited the coast in 1671 and 1672, saw bananas, plantains, and

245 "racoven" [a] among this same tribe as well as among the Kukra of the Corn Islands. M. W. (302, 310) also refers to bananas and plantains among the plants cultivated by the Miskito.

There is a great variety of bananas and plantains grown by these Indians, but by far the most common is the so-called "Gros Michel" (also Jamaica, Martinique, Guadeloupe, or Bluefields), known to the Ladinos as "patriota" or "blanco"; this is the only variety entering largely into world trade. The Chinese or dwarf banana (*Musa chinensis* syn. *M. humilis* and *M. cavendishii*), which is the one grown in the Canary Islands for the European market, is also grown a little; this is the only species suitable for cultivation in the temperate zone and in the higher altitudes of the tropics. It is cultivated in Florida and in southern Louisiana, where it is called "horse banana." Various varieties of the plantain (M.: *plato*, from the Spanish "plátano"; S.: *waki; Musa paradisiaca normalis*) are also grown by both tribes. There are some native names for certain of the local varieties of the plantain and banana.

244 CASSAVA.—Sweet cassava (*Manihot palmata* Muell. or *M. aipi* Pohl; M.: *yauhra;* S.: *malai, maley*) is the staple food of the coastal Miskito; it is also cultivated by those living inland, and by the Sumu. This food plant was mentioned by Raveneau de Lussan (438), Exquemelin (Engl. ed.: 251), and M. W. (310). The bitter cassava (*Manihot utilissima* Pohl) is unknown to either Miskito or Sumu, but is largely cultivated in two different varieties by the Black Carib (Garif) and the Paya of Honduras, who eliminate the deadly hydrocyanic acid contained therein by ingenious methods.

EDDOES OR TANIAS.—This plant, which is known locally among the English-speaking population by the Jamaican name "coco" (*Xanthosoma sagittifolium* Schott; M.: *duswa;* S.: *wilis*), is also cultivated for its eatable tubers. It is of similar appearance and habits as the taro (*Colocasia* sp.), the staple food of the Pacific Islands.

SWEETPOTATOES.—There are several varieties of the sweetpotato (*Ipomaea batatas* Poir.; M.: *tawa;* S.: *pai*). This food plant has been met with by several authors of the seventeenth century among the Miskito of Cabo Gracias a Dios (Exquemelin, Engl. edit.: 251; Dampier: I, 9; M. W.: 310). It was also cultivated by the aborigines of the Corn Islands in those days (Exquemelin, Engl. edit.: 114).

YAMS.—Several varieties of yams (*Dioscorea* sp.) are cultivated;
[[77]] they are of African origin and the Indians have no native name for them.

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[a] This name is probably deformed from pacoba, bacove, bakacoba, or bacoven, names given to the banana in Brazil and in the Guianas. These words derive from pako or pakoba "banana" of the Tupi-Guarani linguistic stock. In the Spanish edition of Exquemelin's work (p. 453) the word is, in fact, spelled "bacoves." Cf. also Van Panhuys, Observations on the Name Bacove, Twenty-first International Congress of Americanists. Göteborg, 1925.

them. There is, however, a semiwild growing variety of a purplish color, which is called *usi* by the Miskito and Sumu; this is probably the one mentioned by Dampier (I, 9) and M. W. (310). 244

OTHER VEGETABLES.—Pumpkins and squashes (*Cucurbita pepo* L.; M.: *iwa*; S.: *ati*) are also grown to some extent, while the chayote or chocho (*Sechium edule* Sw.; M. and S.: *mukula*) and the tomato (*Lycopersicum esculentum* Mill.) are cultivated in a desultory way. The latter plant appears to be indigenous, but there is no native name for it.

MAIZE.—Maize or Indian corn (*Zea mays* L.; M.: *aya*; S.: *am*, *ama*), 243 which forms the staple food practically all over Central America, is sparsely cultivated by the Miskito; however, it was already observed among them during the latter part of the seventeenth century by Raveneau de Lussan (438) and by M. W. (308, 310). This food plant is more esteemed by the Sumu, especially by the Twahka and Ulwa, who grow an inferior quality of inbred maize. It is stored by hanging [251] it under the roof over the smoke in order to prevent molding.

BEANS.—The red or black beans (*Phaseolus vulgaris* L.), which 244 rank as a staple food in large areas of northern and western Central America, are grown to a very small extent by either Miskito or Sumu. The red variety is the one usually found; it is somewhat smaller than the red kidney bean of the United States. Both tribes have a native name (M.: *snak*, *snik*; S.: *sinak*) for the plant; as these designations are also applied to a wild-growing vine, bearing small beanlike fruits, it is very probable that beans have been introduced only in recent times. In fact, this food plant is not mentioned by any one of the seventeenth century authors.

RICE.—Rice (*Oryza sativa* L.) is rarely cultivated and has been 243 introduced recently; it is known by its English or Spanish name. The grain is heavy and rounded, and it differs considerably from the native wild rice of tropical America (*Zizania* sp.), with long, narrow, dark grain.

PEJIVALLE PALM.—The pejivalle or pijibay palm (*Guilielma utilis* 245 Oerst.; M. and S.: *supa*) is cultivated for its edible fruit all over the Mosquito Coast, usually around the Indian huts. The Central American name for this plant appears to have been taken from the Arawak language of Haiti. The palm is probably of South American origin and is extensively cultivated in the tropical part of that continent. It is there known by a great variety of names, of which the following are the best known: Gachipáez, cachipaes or cachipay (Colombia), chonta[46] (Ecuador), piritu, prijao (Venezuela), pupunha (Brazil), paripu, paripi and peach palm (Guianas).

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[46] From the Quichua *chontaruru* or *chontaduro*.

245 On the Atlantic slope of Central America this palm is grown as far north as Rio Tinto in Honduras, but on the Pacific side its northern limit is formed by Lake Nicaragua. It is found only in the cultivated state; the palms found occasionally in deserted regions indicate former village sites. A wild variety, bearing inedible small fruits, is found on the Mosquito Coast to the south of Bluefields; it is there known as "pejivalle de monte" or "wild supa."

Coconut palm.—The coconut palm (*Cocos nucifera* L.), called *kuku* by both tribes, is found in a semiwild state all along the seashore; some of the inland Indians have also planted a few trees. This palm is not mentioned by the buccaneers who visited the Mosquito Coast, as Exquemelin, Dampier, and Raveneau de Lussan; it was met, however, by M. W. (310). The Indians make little use of the coconut, except that they drink the water and eat the tender kernel of the young nut; very few of them extract the oil from it, as do the Creoles and Black Caribs.

249 [171] Sugarcane.—Sugarcane (*Saccharum officinarum* L.; M.: *kayu*, from the Spanish "caña"; S.: *tisnak*) was brought by the Spaniards during the early part of the sixteenth century to the New World, first to the West Indies and later to the mainland.[a] The various buccaneer authors do not say anything of its occurrence among the Miskito. The first mention of this plant on the Mosquito Coast is found by M. W. (310), who states that the Miskito King Jeremy had some in his plantation, but in those days (1699) the Indians did not yet know how to make sugar from the juice. Nowadays they drink the juice of this plant, after having allowed it to ferment; they also boil it into sirup and brown sugar.

Cacao.—Although an indigenous tree, cacao (*Theobroma cacao* L.; M. and S.: *kakau*) is cultivated only by the Ulwa, but in former days it was also grown by the Miskito (M. W.: 308, 310). The [322] Indians also collect the pods from the various varieties of cacao trees which grow wild in shady parts of the forest.

Cacao pataste or "warbra cacao" (*Theobroma bicolor* Humb. and Bonpl.; M.: *wraÑ*; S.: *kuru*) is cultivated, however, in the neighborhood of the huts.

Cactus.—Sloane (a: p. lxxviii) reports that the Miskito cultivated the Opuntia cactus for the breeding of the cochineal insect; this must be a mistake, however, for that industry was limited to the Indian tribes of the Pacific slope and of the interior, particularly in Mexico, Guatemala, Salvador, and Honduras.

245 Fruit trees.—The most common of the indigenous fruit trees, outside of the ones enumerated above, are the following: Pineapples

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[a] Hernán Cortés, the great conquistador of Mexico, introduced the plant from Haiti into Honduras (Trujillo) as early as 1526.

(*Ananas sativus;* M.: *pihto;* S.: *masa, masahti*),[44] papaws or papayas 245
(*Carica papaya* L.; M.: *twas, tawas;* S.: *ulmak, ulumak*), avocados or alligator pears (*Persea gratissima* Gaertn.; M.: *sikya;* S.: *sikya, sariñ*), soursops (*Anona muricata* L.; M.: *dwarsap;* S.: *sapot*), guavas (*Psidium guajava* L.; M.: *sikra;* S.: *burimak*), cashews (*Anacardium occidentale* L.; M. and S.: *kasau*), and watermelons (*Citrullus vulgaris* Schrad.; M. and S.: *rayapies*). Spanish plums (*Spondias purpurea* L.), although apparently indigenous, are rarely found, and their Indian name *ploms* comes from the English language.

The most important fruit trees of foreign origin are: Citrus fruits 245
(oranges, lemons, sweet limes, sour limes, shaddocks, grapefruits, 177
citrons), mangoes (*Mangifera indica* L.), breadfruits (*Artocarpus communis* syn. *incisa*), tamarinds (*Tamarindus indica* L.), and rose apples (*Eugenia jambos* L.).

Gardens.—Around their houses many Indians cultivate also a few fruit trees and other plants. The calabash tree (*Crescentia cujete* L.; M.: *lakmi;* S.: *sutak*) is very common in these gardens; it is esteemed for the very useful kitchen receptacles obtained from its fruit. A few bushes of cotton (*Gossypium peruvianum* Cav.; M.: *wakmak;* S.: *wakmak*), chile peppers (*Capsicum* sp.; M.: *kuma;* S.: *anmak, añmak*) and annatto (*Bixa orellana* L.; M.: *aulala, tmariñ;* S.: *asal*) are found near every lodge. A number of flowers are also cultivated, as the African marigolds, purple and white four-o'clocks, and the crimson hibiscus.

FISHING AND FISHING IMPLEMENTS

A very large share of the food supply of these primitive Indians is 226
obtained from the sea, the lagoons, and the rivers. Fishing is therefore an occupation wherein both tribes have attained an unusual degree of skill. The main implements used for this purpose are harpoons, fishhooks, nets, and bows and arrows.

Javelin.—The javelin or throwing spear (M.: *waisku;* S.: *sukuk*) 411
is used in the sea, lagoons, and larger rivers. It consists of a wooden staff, from 8 to 9 feet in length, in the front end of which a sharp barbed steel head has been inserted. The staff is of strong, slender, light wood, generally of a tree called "magaleta" (M.: *sihnak, sinak;* S.: *sina*); the Ulwa, however, use for this purpose the wood of a tree called by them *pan-kuba*, which is said to be superior to the above-mentioned species. The loosely fitting steel point is from 4 to 5 inches long and is made of an old file, wherein several series of double

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[44] The old authors, Exquemelin (Engl. edit.: 251), Dampier (I, 9), and M. W. (308, 310), met this fruit among the Miskito during the latter part of the seventeenth century; in those days it was also cultivated by the aborigines of the Corn Islands (Exquemelin, Engl. edit.: 114).

411 barbs have been made with the aid of another file. Previous to the introduction of iron and steel the Indians made their spear points of pointed and barbed pieces of bamboo. A cord about 50 feet in length is attached to the point, while the other end of it is wound round a long reel of light wood, which acts as a "bob" or float, and is stuck at the distal end of the staff. These Indians call the float *kunkun*, which name is also applied by the Sumu to the balsa tree (*Ochroma lagopus* Sw.), from which it is usually made. Sometimes the red cedar (*Cedrela* sp.) or the roots of the "bobwood" tree (*Anona palustris*) are employed for this purpose by the Miskito.

The javelin is used only for the larger fishes, such as the carplike snook (M. and S.: *mopi*) and the salmonlike tarpon (M. and S.: *tapam*, *tahpam*) which are frequently met with in the larger rivers.

226 Two men generally work together when fishing with this implement. The one in the bow of the boat signals his companion how to steer by motioning with the hand. They glide noiselessly over the water, and when within reach of a fish, that is, about 60 feet distant from it, the bowman stands up with the spear in his right hand and aims and throws at a single fish, which he may be unable to see through the thickness of water. The only thing visible is the fish's "wake," that is, the ripple produced on the surface of the water as he swims lazily along. By that the Indian guesses the species of the fish as well as the depth at which he swims under water. It may be 2 feet. The spear is thrown in such a manner that it strikes the water almost vertically; the Indians seldom miss, for they have practiced this sport from early childhood. Upon striking the fish, the cord unwinds; harpoon and reel become detached from the staff, but they are attached to each other by the cord. The reel acts like a float and points out the whereabouts of the prize; with its aid the latter is secured. When the fish is tired, it is drawn near the canoe, killed with a stick, and hauled in. Then the staff, which is also of floatable wood, is likewise caught.

At the beginning of the rainy season the Miskito also practice this sport at night, especially in the lagoons. At such places where the fresh water comes in contact with the sea water it blazes as the fish swims along, thus indicating the latter's presence.

On dark nights the fish is also speared with the aid of a pitch-pine torch which is held by a third man in the boat. The glare of the torch attracts the fish and enables the bowman to spy his prey, which is immediately transfixed by the harpoon. This sport of fishing with a torch is practiced chiefly in November and December.

[171] The Sumu seldom employ this fishing implement as it is of little use in the small rocky streams where the bulk of this tribe lives. On the other hand, many Creoles and Ladinos living on the coast have learned from the Indians how to handle it.

Manatee spearing.—A similar spear, but with a point having not more than 2 inches in length and provided with only one or two barbs, is used to catch the manatee or sea cow (*Trichechus* sp.). The staff and float are identical as in the fish spear, but the line is thicker and stronger, for the manatee is a large and powerful animal. Dampier (I, 35–36) gives an account of the method practiced by the Miskito to secure this large mammal; it is still done so in our days. The Indians go after the manatee during the early morning when it grazes on the banks of the rivers and lagoons. The canoe is sometimes covered with branches or bushes, giving the appearance of a floating tree or island. When speared, the manatee makes off at a great speed, followed by the Indians, who can ascertain the direction which it takes from the float rippling the surface of the water. They manage to seize the latter and tie the distal end of the line to the bow of the boat. Gradually they advance toward the animal, hauling in the cord as they proceed. But the victim, seeing or hearing the craft, makes away a second time, dragging behind it the canoe with the Indians, at no little risk to the latter. Sometimes a second harpoon is driven into it. Finally the manatee is totally exhausted; the Indians then approach and kill it with their machetes or with sticks and then haul it into their small craft. As the manatee may weigh from 500 to 600 pounds, this is no easy matter. Both Indians get in the water and, holding onto the sides of their boat, they tilt it over so as to swamp it, whereupon they push it under their prize. Then the water is quickly bailed out of the canoe with the aid of a large calabash and the craft gradually rises. When all the water has been bailed out both men get in again and triumphantly paddle home.

Turtle spearing.—The harpoon (*silak*) used for spearing turtle is not provided with a float, but it has a cord measuring up to 30 fathoms in length, the distal end of which is attached to the bow of the boat. The shaft or staff is of pejivalle wood, or of some wild species of palm, known by the Miskito names *apo* and *rāwua;* the cord is tied firmly to it, for it does not float. This staff is from 2 to 3 inches thick and tapers gradually to a point at the rear end. An iron or steel point is inserted in the other extremity and an iron band is fitted around, in order to prevent the wood from splitting upon striking the turtle, for the harpoon is thown with great force. The point or head, locally called "peg" (*silak*), is triangular in section; it is single barbed at each one of the three lateral edges. Its length is only from 1½ to 2 inches, which fact enables it to get a good hold on the hard carapace of the turtle and at the same time not enter far enough to kill it. The Indians endeavor to approach either behind or directly in front of the turtle, as it does not see well straight ahead. When it comes to the surface to breathe, which takes place at intervals of about 20 minutes, the spear is thrown into the air in such a

225 manner as to fall vertically onto and thus pierce the tough shell of the turtle. If thrown obliquely it would glance off the smooth carapace. Upon being struck the turtle disappears in the water, dragging the long line with the boat along, but after a while it becomes exhausted by its struggle. The boat is swamped and placed under the turtle to haul it in, for the latter may weigh up to several hundred pounds. By shoving the canoe from one side to the other the Indians throw out enough water to allow it to float, while the remainder is bailed out with a calabash. After the extraction of the harpoon head, the wound is stopped with cloth; otherwise the turtle may die. These animals are also harpooned at night, their presence being indicated by the line of phosphorescent light they produce in the water. A smaller implement is employed for young sea turtles and for the different smaller varieties met with in the rivers.

TURTLE NETS.—The Miskito of Tasbapauni (Pearl Lagoon) also employ large turtle nets, from 50 to 100 fathoms in length and from 6 to 8 feet in width, made of imported twine. These nets have been introduced into the country by the fishermen from the Cayman Islands and the Bay Islands. These turtle nets have very large meshes; they are anchored at the bottom and floated with buoys placed along the margin. Wooden turtle decoys are also attached to them in order to attract the prize, which becomes entangled therein and is then easily caught. Sometimes turtles die in the nets, being unable to rise to the surface to breathe.

OTHER METHODS OF CATCHING TURTLES.—Sea turtles are also caught at night by the Indians, when they come to the shore to dig a hole in the sand to deposit their eggs therein. They then carefully cover up the hole again, and occasionally even deposit some leaves or driftwood on the spot, so as to prevent detection. The Indians are very clever in discovering the eggs, being guided by indications on the surface sand. They poke suspected places with pointed sticks and by the moist particles adhering to the latter they immediately perceive when an egg has been pierced. Upon withdrawing the stick they examine and smell it, and having come to a satisfactory conclusion they turn up the sand. The Indian will also run after the turtle, overhaul it, and turn it on its back so as to render it helpless.

The green sea turtle (M.: *wli, lih;* S.: *wili*) is considered a great delicacy while the loggerhead and the hawk's-bill are also eaten. The latter species furnishes the valuable shell. Turtles are penned in [417] stockades or "crawls,"[45] made by driving heavy mangrove posts in the shallow sea water, until needed for food.

Several species of tortoises, of which the largest is the bocatora (M.: *kuswa*[46]; S.: *kowa, kuwa*) are also greatly esteemed as food.

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[45] From the Spanish corral, "cattle pen."

[46] M. W. (312) gives this name in the form *cushwaw.*

They are caught with the hook or by diving after them; some Indians will also catch the sea turtles in this manner and bring them up in their hands, but this feat is attended with danger, from bites and sharp coral. The bocatora tortoise is speckled black and yellow and is found in the larger rivers only. It lays about 20 round eggs in the sand, silt, or even in stiff earth; the eggs are inclosed in a rough calcareous parchment and are considered a great delicacy. 225

LANCES.—Two varieties of long spears, with fixed points, are employed for striking fish. They are not thrown, but kept in the hand while striking. These implements are found chiefly among the river Indians, Miskito as well as Sumu. The thin, strong staff, which may be from 10 to 15 feet in length, is made from the stem of a tree called by the Ladinos "cacao" (M.: *sakalpihni;* S.: *babasnak*). Of these two implements the more common one (M.: *sihnak;* S.: *sukwak*) has a harpoonlike point, similar to that of the javelin or throwing spear. The other one (M. and S.: *daka*) is provided with a pointed piece of thick wire or some other metal, which looks like a nail; for that reason it is called "clavo" by the Ladinos, who also use it in fishing. 411

FISHHOOKS.—Fishing with the hook (M.: *kyul;* T., P.: *kuyul;* U.: *simin*) is done chiefly by the women, children, and old men. The line is made of silk-grass fiber (*Bromelia* sp.) and is dyed black with vegetable juices, so as to render it less conspicuous. The hooks are of foreign manufacture but in former days crooked bones were used for the purpose. The Indians bait them with worms, spiders, grasshoppers, or fruits (guavas, wild figs). 227

At certain times of the year when the fruits of the wild fig or of other trees growing along the edge of the river begin to drop, the Indians fish without any bait at all. They flick and cast their long line about, lashing the surface of the water, and letting it sink, presently raising it with a peculiar movement of the wrist. This noise is regarded by the fish as resulting from the dropping of overhanging fruits and they will greedily snap after them and then be caught by the hook. 226

FISHING NETS.—A small fishing net (M.: *ilis, tan;* T.: *wilino;* P.: *disa;* U.: *yano*), made of silk-grass fiber, is used by both Miskito and Sumu. With its aid they close the mouth of narrow creeks, in order to catch the fish trying to enter the main river. Wickham (b: 238; c: 208) already mentions the use of drag nets among the Ulwa of Rio Escondido; the Indians employed it in low water in the pools scattered among the bowlders or rocks in the rapids and falls. 227

The cast net and the seine have also been introduced recently among the Miskito. The former especially is becoming popular. Having the folded net in his hand, the Indian throws it like a lasso upon the water in such a manner that by a single cast it becomes suspended almost to its whole width, surprising and catching the

227 fish on that spot; the presence of the latter is indicated to him from certain movements on the surface of the water. Lead balls or small round pebbles are attached to the edges of the net in order to keep it down in the water.

226 Bow and arrow.—Several river fishes, especially the short, deep, bluish-purple, perchlike species, which is known locally by the Miskito name *tuba* (S.: *pahwa*, *pahawa*, *pâu*), are generally killed with bow and arrow. (See Hunting and Fighting Implements.) Two allied fishes, the moga (M. and S.: *moba*) and the guapote (M.: *sahsiñ*; S.: *musa*), are also killed in this manner.

The fishermen will sit entire hours at the waterside, keeping up continually a low, plaintive whistling, which is said to entice the fish within arrow shot. This requires great patience, a quality of which the Indian is not lacking, especially when it comes to hunting and fishing. The point of the arrow is held sometimes a foot deep in the water. At the approach of a fish the arrow goes off quick as lightning, and it rarely misses the mark. On account of its featherlight shaft it returns again to the surface and the fish is easily seized. This exercise is extremely difficult, as the true position of the fish is not the one in which it appears to sight, but it varies with the distance of the fish, with the latter's depth in the water, and upon the reflection of the light. In case the fisherman misses the arrow will return to the surface with the same degree as it had been shot down.

[278] Fish "poisoning."—Fish are also caught by "poisoning" the water of small creeks. For this purpose the Indians utilize several vines, especially *Seriania inebrians* (M.: *basala*; T., P.: *wana*; U.: *wahnari*); in Central America all of these varieties are known by the Quichua name "barbasco" or the Aztec "amol" (amolli). The vine is crushed with flat stones or wooden clubs, in order to release the poisonous milky juice. At a narrow part the creek has been barred by a sort of weir or fence made of sticks, stones, or branches in the form of an angle with the point in the middle of the stream. At some distance above this spot the crushed plant is thrown in the water, and the poisonous juice will spread and stupefy all the fish in the neighborhood. The latter then float on the surface and are carried down the stream, but they are intercepted by the weir, where they are caught by the Indians standing in the water and thrown on land. Larger fishes, which are not entirely powerless, are easily harpooned in this condition. By this method enormous quantities of fish may be obtained in a short time. The smaller fishes are allowed to float away and recover in the unadulterated water below. The juice of the "barbasco" is also poisonous to man, but it does not affect the taste of fish killed or stupefied with it. This manner of fishing is widespread in both Americas.

Dynamiting fish.—Fish are also caught by exploding dynamite in the deeper holes and eddies of the rivers. This is practiced chiefly by the Indians living around the mining districts, where they can easily obtain sticks of dynamite. Several severe accidents have resulted among the Indians by this manner of fishing.

Fish pots.—Fish pots (*piepat*) of cylindrical shape are also made by the Indians nowadays of split bamboo. They are of recent introduction and there is no native name for them. At one extremity this implement has a funnel-shaped opening. The apex of the funnel points toward the center of the trap, so that the fish can easily enter it, but is unable to get out again.

Other methods of fishing.—A very peculiar method of fishing is sometimes employed in order to catch certain species which have the habit of leaping out of the water when they believe themselves persecuted by other fishes. The Indians paddle slowly along the bank of the river, rocking the boat as violently as they can, at the same time making much noise by beating the bank with their paddles. The fish, leaping in terror out of the water, will fall in the canoe, and are killed immediately, so as to prevent them from escaping by another leap. This method was observed by Ferdinand Columbus in 1502 on the Atlantic coast of Panama; the natives used to catch in that way a small fish described as "pilchard." The canoe was provided with a screen erected longitudinally from bow to stern. The terrorized fish, upon leaping out of the water, struck against the screen and fell into the bottom of the canoe.

It happens not infrequently that, while rowing over shoals of fish after the breeding season, the stroke of the paddles may cause the fish to jump out of the water and land in the canoe. The common mullet, an excellent food fish, resembling the herring, which is found in large shoals in the lagoons and larger rivers, is easily caught during still, dark nights, by paddling noiselessly along and then suddenly striking the side of the boat violently with the paddle. A gigantic species of mullet, called *kukkale* by the Indians, likewise has the habit of jumping out of the water on hearing any sudden noise. This fish does not take the bait and readily jumps out of a net.

During the dry season fish are easily caught in the old river beds or lagoons, which may be found all along the larger rivers, for all these streams are changing their course constantly. During the rainy season the water from the main river flows in these lagoons, but in summer the reverse is the case. These old river beds are then the favorite fishing grounds of women and children. They dam up a shallow portion thereof and then bail out the water in order to seize the fishes caught therein. Should a cold rain occur during low water the temperature of these water sheets will be reduced considerably, relatively speaking, and many fishes die from exposure to the cold.

226 At night torchlights are used to attract the fish and induce them to rise to the surface, where they are killed by a stroke with the machete; the latter weapon is also used to chop the "sleeping" fishes, which are easily detected with the torches.

Along the river banks and among the rocks the Indians also "feel" for certain fishes and for crustacea.

[262] 225 Catching alligators.—The tail part of young alligators and crocodiles is also occasionally eaten. These ugly reptiles are caught with the aid of large hooks. Young (61) gives the following account of the manner practiced by the Sumu to catch these repulsive creatures but, needless to say, this applies only to young specimens: "A Sumu Indian, when he sees an alligator near the banks of the river, will boldly swim under water, carrying a native-manufactured rope with a noose in it, until he reaches the creature; he will then dexterously affix the noose to its leg; his companions at the same moment, having hold of the other end of the rope, pull it vigorously, and the alligator is speedily drawn out and despatched."

226 Crustacea and mollusks.—Lobsters, crabs, and mollusks (conchs, large whelks, mussels, oysters) are also gathered by the women, and form an important item of food. In the larger lagoons two kinds of edible oysters are common; the smaller one, or mangrove oyster, attaches itself to the roots of the mangrove tree, while the larger one occurs in banks in certain parts of the lagoons.

172 A small bivalve mollusk, known locally as "cockle" (M. and S.: *āhi*), appears to have played in former days an enormous rôle in the food supply. A number of refuse heaps, up to 20 feet in height, consisting of cockle shells intermingled with fragments of domestic utensils of stone, bone, or pottery, have been discovered on the western shore of Bluefields Lagoon. Two of such *tumuli* were examined by the writer on Cucra Point in 1921. They consisted nearly exclusively of the above-mentioned small cockle shell, which mollusk is found in the shallow water of the lagoon. Oyster shells were rare, although extensive oyster banks exist also in certain parts of the Bluefields Lagoon. These shell mounds (shell heaps, kitchen middens, kitchen débris), called also by the Danish word *kjøkkenmødding*, indicate undoubtedly old dwelling sites; from their great size it is evident that long periods of time must have been required for their accumulation. A number of them were also found at the site of Bluefields and likewise a little to the north; they have been carried away to "metal" the streets of that town. See also Bell (a: 260; b: 18), Wickham (b: 251–252), and Spinden (532–533).

226 777 Fishing charms.—Certain charms are said to be very efficacious at fishing. Stones found in the stomach of fishes are highly valued, as their possessor will have good luck in catching that particular species of fish. Heads and spines from the larger species are also

kept in the hut for that purpose. When the Indians catch the palometa 226
fish (M. and S.: *trisu*), they return to the water with the bones 777
and throw them in the same spot, believing that by so doing they
will always be favored with good luck when fishing for palometa.
In case a woman *enciente* eats this fish, however, it will not bite any
more during that season.

HUNTING AND FIGHTING IMPLEMENTS

Weapons naturally play a great rôle among primitive people, for 411
they are used to defend themselves against the wild animals of the
forest as well as against their own kind, which is even more dangerous
than the beasts of the jungle. Nowadays they are not used any
longer in warfare, for the various tribes are at peace, but they still
furnish the Indians with the means of procuring a large share of
their food supply.

Defensive weapons.—Defensive weapons have gone out of existence 713
since intertribal wars have ceased, but in former days the
Miskito employed round shields (*kabaika*) of light wood or of tapir
hide. Armors of plaited reed are also reported; they were covered
with jaguar skin and ornamented with feathers. The northern
Miskito used a breastplate of twisted cotton like that of the Mexicans [171]
(Bancroft: I, 723).

Blowgun.—The blowpipe or blowgun is said to be still found 411
among the Ulwa of Rio Escondido, but the present writer was unable
to obtain any details pertaining to that arm. Lehmann (c: I, 503),
however, gives the name *makar* (compare Bribri *mákol*) for the blowgun
among the Ulwa of Rio Murra, a northern affluent of Rio
Escondido. According to Bell (b: 232) the Indian children had little
blowguns to blow little balls of black wax through, in order to kill
wasps, butterflies, and small house lizards. They were made from
a reed, called *brasirpi*, the joints of which are about 1½ feet in length.

The use of the blowgun as a hunting and fighting implement would 411
necessarily point to an acquaintance with arrow poison. In fact,
Benito Garret y Arlovi in a report from the year 1711 (Peralta, 278
b: 59) states that some of the Miskito used arrow poison. Bancroft 171
(I, 722–723) says that these Indians employed the juice of the manchineel
tree (*Hippomane mancinella* L.) to poison arrows and darts,
but he fails to indicate the source of his information. It is well
known that the Chocó and Tule (Cuna, San Blas) Indians of Panama,
like the Caribs of the Lesser Antilles, poisoned their arrows in former
days by dipping them in the milky juice of that tree. I have not seen
the tree in question on the Mosquito Coast, nor learned its native
name; Ziock (69, 237), however, calls it *liwakumya* in the Miskito

411 language, and gives this name also as that of an island among the
278 Mosquito Keys.

171 The secretions from an indigenous pale greenish-blue frog (*Dendrobates tinctorius*) may also have been used as an arrow poison, as is done by several tribes of Colombia.

411 LANCES AND SPEARS.—Lances and spears, tipped with fishbones or with flint, were formerly used for hunting and fighting, but to-day they are employed exclusively in fishing. (See Fishing and Fishing Implements.) Ferdinand Columbus mentions these weapons and says that they were made of palm wood, black as coal and hard as horn, and pointed with the bones of fishes. The javelin or t[illegible]ing spear is evidently the weapon mentioned in old Spanish documents under the name of "vara para tirar." According to Exquemelin (Engl. edit.: 114) lances of a fathom and [illegible] half in length and tipped with a crocodile tooth were one of the principal arms of the aborigines of the Corn Islands.

SLINGS.—Small slings (M.: *prúuprúukya*) for throwing stones are sometimes employed to kill birds.

CLUBS.—Wooden clubs (M.: *dyara prukaya;* T.: *di báunin;* U.: *dibáunaka*) jagged with alligator teeth constituted a dangerous weapon in former days, but they disappeared many years ago.

BOW AND ARROW.—Bow and arrow appear to have been the principal weapon of the tribes under consideration; still they are said to have been unknown to the natives of the Corn Islands, who apparently belonged to the Kukra, a subtribe of the Sumu (Exquemelin, Engl. edit.: 114). It is known, however, that the Kukra living on the shores of Bluefields Lagoon possessed arrows, and a description thereof has been left to us by the same author, Exquemelin, whose vessel anchored at that lagoon in 1671. One morning several women slaves from this buccaneer vessel were attacked by a group of Indians and pierced by a great number of arrows. The latter were made of palm wood, 8 feet in length (5 to 6 feet according to the French edition), round in section and of the thickness of a thumb. They were tipped with sharp points of flint which were tied firmly into the arrow together with a wooden hook, so that the arrow point presented a harpoonlike appearance; the other extremity ended in a point. Other arrows had at the distal end a small wooden box, 1 foot long, filled with round pebbles, evidently in order to increase the power of the arrow. The Indians had been careful enough to put some leaves in this box in order to reduce the noise produced by the pebbles upon shooting the arrow off. Some of these arrows were painted red (Exquemelin, Engl. edit.: 247–248; Span. edit.: 446; French edit.: II, 257–258).

There is no record of these Indians affixing feathers to their arrows, nor is there any other method known among them to guide their direction.

Nowadays the Miskito do not make use of bow and arrow, except for fishing. The elder Sumu still prefer these arms for hunting, as they do not make any noise and do not scare the game in the neighborhood as is the case with firearms. The lower end of the arrow is seized with the thumb and forefinger of the right hand, while the left hand is placed upon the bow and serves to direct the arrow and help in spanning the bow also.

Bow.—The bow (M.: *pantamañka;* T., P.: *las;* U.: *sibañ oka* "arrow house") is made of the hard wood of the pejivalle palm or of the cortes (*Tecoma chrysantha* DC.). It is roughly polished and flattened, with a rectangular or oblong cross section. It is widest in the center (about 1 inch) and becomes gradually narrower toward both extremities. It is of uniform thickness—that is, about a quarter of an inch—while the length varies from 4 to 5 feet. The bowstring (M.: *pantamañka awa;* T., P.: *las wahni;* U.: *sibañ wahka*), which is made of silk-grass fiber, is fastened to the tips at both extremities of the bow and is always kept rigid.

Arrows in general.—The arrow (M.: *trisba;* S.: *sibañ, sikarna*), like the bow, is made of the wood of the pejivalle palm. It is always round in section and of nearly uniform thickness; at the front end, however, it is gradually tapering and terminates in a point. The other extremity is inserted into a shaft of wild cane and firmly held in place with the aid of silk-grass fiber. In the distal end of the hollow shaft small pieces of wood are inserted, and then likewise some thread is wound round tightly in order to avoid splitting or any other damage liable to be caused by friction against the bowstring. Native beeswax (M.: *blas;* S.: *balas*) is applied to the string; it acts as a cement and protects the latter from sun and rain, which would cause it to become slack.

The wild cane (M.: *yahurus;* S.: *dapa*), which is to be used for arrow shafts, is cut immediately after flowering—that is, about August or September. The upper part or flower stalk only is employed. It is first placed in the fire for a few minutes in order to render it more pliable and facilitate the straightening of it. The Indians carefully test the straightness and balance of the reed by looking along it while held at arm's length. After this operation the cane is left to dry and harden in the sun. The reeds are then tied in bundles and kept under the house rafters, over the smoke of the fire, until needed; this makes them immune from boring insects and worms.

Fishing arrows.—There are various sorts of arrows. The simplest one, called *slauni* by the Miskito and Creoles and *sikarna* by the Sumu (*pan subañ* in the dialect of Rio Patuca), which is only

411 used for fishing, consists merely of a shaft of wild cane into which a sharply pointed foreshaft of pejivalle wood, hardened in the fire, has been inserted and firmly tied as stated above. The latter is smoothed with the aid of a machete or large knife, which tools are used after the manner of a carpenter's plane. This kind of arrow is the largest one found on the Mosquito Coast, and it may reach 6 feet in length. Occasionally it is jagged on either side into more or less definite barbs. The arrow does not sink, owing to the feather-light shaft, which will always rise to the surface. On the Mosquito Coast the use of this arrow has also spread to some of the Creoles and Ladinos.

HUNTING ARROWS.—The hunting arrow (M.: *trisba;* S.: *sibak*) measures only 5 feet in length, as the shaft of wild cane is considerably shorter than in the one used for fishing. Unlike the latter, the hardwood foreshaft is not pointed, but a piece of iron or steel made from barrel hoops or other scrap iron is inserted in front. The latter is lanceolate in shape and has sharp edges. As the art of melting metal is unknown to these Indians, they make these arrow points with the aid of files. According to Exquemelin (Engl. edit.: 251), the Miskito in 1671 used iron points or alligator teeth to tip their arrows. Flint, obsidian, turtle shell, sharp fishbone, and shark teeth[67] were also used for this purpose in former days. Barbed arrows and trident or composite arrow heads are now unknown.

BIRD ARROWS.—For birds and small animals the Indians make use of small arrows with blunt knobs of hardwood or beeswax, called *ura* by the Miskito and *ubo* or *ubur* by the Sumu. With these arrows they seldom kill, but merely stun the game, so that they can capture it alive. They are also used in the houses to scare away dogs, pigs, and fowls without being compelled to get up from the seat.

QUIVERS.—Quivers (M.: *trisba taya* "arrow skin") were apparently of ceremonial use only, and they were employed to carry the arrows during the festivals. They were made of red deerskin, as is indicated by their Sumu name (T.: *sana untak;* P.: *sana onitak;* U.: *sana okatak*). At the present time quivers have disappeared entirely, and the arrows are always carried in the hand by the hunter.

FIREARMS.—The buccaneers of the latter half of the seventeenth century apparently introduced firearms among the Miskito.[68] In

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171 [67] The Rama still employ shark teeth to tip their hunting arrows, and they claim that a wound caused with such an arm will almost invariably be fatal.

175 [68] It is possible that firearms were already introduced among the Miskito at an earlier period, during the years 1630 to 1641, when the two islands of Providencia and Santa Catalina, situated off the Mosquito Coast, and now belonging to Colombia, were colonized by English Puritans. The latter opened friendly and commercial relations with the Miskito, who were living chiefly around Cabo Gracias a Dios and Sandy Bay in those days. In 1633 a certain Capt. Sussex

recent times this arm has also spread to the Sumu. The Indians 411 use muzzle-loading shotguns, called *raks* or *rakbus* by the Miskito and *arakbus* or *arakbas* by the Sumu. These names are evidently of European origin and are taken from the English "harquebus" or the French "arquebuse," or perhaps the Spanish "arcabuz." Powder is known by its English name (*páutar*), but shot, which is generally kept in the small *piepis* bottle gourd (*Lagenaria lagenaria*), is spoken of by the Indians as the "eggs of the shotgun" (M.: *raks mabra;* S.: *arakbus suma*). Double-barreled guns (M.: *raks sutki;* S.: *arakbus sutki*, that is, "twin guns") are also occasionally met with.

THE CHASE

Skill in hunting.—Game is very abundant in this sparsely 224 151 inhabited part of Central America. The Indian is an excellent hunter; the keenness of his senses is marvelous and nothing escapes his eyes. Every sound is noticed and understood, and the distance and the direction whence any noise proceeds is estimated with surprising accuracy. The Indian has a marvelous instinct which permits him to discover with great ease the footprints of animals and then determine the species to which they belong. He pursues the game through the thicket with the sagacity of the bloodhound.

A male occupation.—The wife never accompanies her husband 224 on the actual hunt, where she would be in his way, for she does not learn to handle any arms. When a number of men organize a hunting party, expected to last more than a day, they may be accompanied by the members of their family. Arrived at a place said to be rich in game, they erect temporary sheds, wherefrom they undertake smaller expeditions in different directions. The hunters start out early in the morning, and before nightfall they rejoin the women and children, who have been left behind at the provisional ranch. The best time for hunting is in the morning before 9 o'clock and in the evening after

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Camock, a member of that Puritan colony, appears to have founded a settlement at Cabo Gracias a Dios. Having gained the confidence of the Indians, the 175 son of one of their most important chiefs was taken to England, where he remained two years, a certain Colonel Morris remaining as hostage among the Indians. Some of these Indians went occasionally to Providencia, where they learned English and were instructed in the Christian religion (Sloan, a: pp. LXXVI–LXXVII; Bridges: II, 138–139). In 1641 this Puritan colony, which by that time had found it more profitable to take up privateering than to pursue the peaceable occupation of farming, was stamped out by a Spanish expedition; the settlers then left for other regions, chiefly to the Bahama Islands.

According to Esquemelin (French edit.: II, 277), who wrote in 1678, the first buccaneers, a French vessel, anchored at Cabo Gracias a Dios 60 years previously—that is, about 1618—and entered into friendly relations with the Indians; the buccaneers would seem, therefore, to have been the first Europeans with whom the Miskito became friendly.

224 4 o'clock; that is when the animals and birds are feeding. During the remainder of the day the forest is quiet, and most of the birds roost in the dense treetops.

487 224 Travel to the hunting ground.—Travel is effected chiefly by small pitpans, for the Indians are canoe men by necessity, the rivers being their roads. They leave their boat at a certain spot, the parting point of a trail leading to a good hunting ground, that is, a region abundant in fruit trees. To a stranger such hunting trails are barely perceptible; here and there marks on trees made with the machete and broken twigs indicate the direction. The Indians always travel in single file, even when there is a broad road, or when they traverse open country. In marching they always glance at the sun and they observe the direction the clouds are moving, that is from northeast to southwest on the Mosquito Coast. Intuitively they keep in their mind a mental picture of the direction they came from. They walk along, silent and watchful, and at times stand still to listen.

224 Stalking.—The Indian is an expert stalker, but not a true sportsman; he rarely shoots at the game while it is in motion, except in the midst of a flock of flying birds. He therefore rarely misses the mark, but is not necessarily a good marksman. Owing to his scarce clothing he moves about the forest without making any noise. His color also appears to a certain degree to assimilate with the forest.

Imitating the call of the game.—The Indian huntsman imitates the call of animals and birds, in order to call them within arrow or gun shot. Bone whistles (M.: *kyaki wasbaya;* S.: *malka kuñ*) are used to lure the agouti (*Dasyprocta* sp.) under certain trees at the time when the latter drop their fruits. This trick is especially successful during the pairing season of certain animals. The Indian is thoroughly acquainted with the habits of the game.

Hunting dogs.—A lot of skinny, mangy dogs, esteemed for their skill in stirring up the game, are found in the Indian villages. With the aid of large dogs trained for the purpose, the jaguar is cornered and the puma is driven up a tree, where it may easily be shot by the hunter. When the Indian ascends a stream he keeps close to the river bank and lets his dog range the woods. The latter, upon scaring up some game, will give tongue immediately and endeavor to drive it to the water. This is the common way of hunting the paca which lives at the river bank and plunges into the water when pursued. This rodent also enters hollow trees and burrows in the ground and is then difficult to secure. Its meat is delicious and is appreciated by the average foreigner.

224 824 Before leaving for the chase the dog's snout is rubbed with certain herbs, so that the game shall not be able to smell it. This procedure is also supposed to clear the scent of the dog and sharpen his perceptions. An infusion from a small parasitic plant, called in Spanish

"lengua de venado" (deer's tongue), is administered by the Sumu to the hunting dogs when they wish to get a deer. 224 224

HUNTING WEAPONS.—Muzzle-loading shotguns (M.: *raks, rakbus*; S.: *arakbus, arakbas*) are now used on the chase by all the Miskito, but bow and arrow (see Hunting and Fighting Implements) are still employed by the Sumu for that purpose. The arrow is not discharged at an object more than 75 feet away, but it has the advantage of not scaring the other game in the neighborhood, as does the discharge of a gun. Upon meeting a drove of peccaries, the hunters surround it, and each one of them will attempt to shoot several arrows before the scared game have found an outlet to escape. Three or four arrows are generally taken along by each man, as the wild cane shaft generally breaks during the struggle of the wounded animal; the larger game may even break the hardwood foreshaft or the iron head of the arrow. 224

Snares, traps, and slings are seldom used to-day. The Kukra are said to have been expert in capturing big game by making a deep hole in the neighborhood of fruit trees. It was carefully camouflaged with the aid of branches and leaves, and a small trail was cut to lead the victims to it.

DEER.—Nocturnal animals, especially the two small species of deer found in the country (*Odocoileus* sp. and *Mazama* sp.), are hunted occasionally with the aid of torches. Toward the close of the dry season the savanna is also fired and drives are organized to hunt deer or other animals, which are driven in a corner, where they are easily secured. Deer, agouti, and birds are the chief game found in the savannas and along the coast.

PECCARY.—The white-lipped peccary (*Tayassu* sp.) is highly esteemed as meat; it travels in large droves, which may be heard from some distance. Occasionally it charges the hunter and forces him up a tree; some bushmen claim, however, that all one needs to do in such circumstance is to step behind a large tree, whereupon the animals keep on rushing forward without attempting to turn. The smaller collared peccary (*Pecari angulatus*) has a dorsal gland which Europeans regarded as the navel in former days; this gland has to be cut off immediately after death, otherwise the flesh can hardly be eaten. The weight of these beasts may range from 50 to 100 pounds. The peccaries, like most of the other edible animals, are supposed to have an owner, who keeps them shut up at times, and does not release them unless the sukya practices certain rites of incantation and makes a small offering.

OTHER MAMMALS.—Among the other game animals the most esteemed are two species of monkey, the spider monkey (*Ateles* sp.) and the capuchin monkey (*Cebus* sp.). The tapir (*Tapirella bairdii* syn. *Elasmognathus bairdii*) is considered a special delicacy in certain regions of the Mosquito Coast; in other districts its flesh is said to be

224 coarse and unhealthy and even is taboo. The Miskito call ~~it~~ *tilba*, which name is already mentioned at the end of the seventeenth century in the form *tilbu* (M. W.: 311).

Lizards.—The largest lizard is the green iguana (*Iguana tuberculata*) which is generally shot while feeding on the river banks or in the branches of some overhanging tree. Sometimes it tries to escape by dashing into the water, where the Indians attempt to catch it by diving after it. It is sometimes kept alive by the Indians until required for food. For this purpose they break the thighs and armbones, and put the backbone out of joint; or else they twist the legs and tie the front ones over the back and the hind ones over the tail by their own sinews. The poor animal is thus unable to run away. The eggs of the iguana are also highly esteemed.

Birds.—Various species of guans (*Penelope*, *Ortalis*, *Pipile* [illegible]), the yellow-crested black curassows (*Crax* sp.), mountain hens (*Tinamus* sp.), quails (*Ortyx* sp.), partridges (*Odontophorus* sp.), pigeons (*Colomba* sp.), and wild ducks (*Cairina moschata*) are esteemed as game birds.

224 482 **Return from the chase.**—After the chase the game is carried on the back to the canoe. When a large animal, as a peccary, has been killed each fore and hind foot are tied together with the aid of withes. The Indian, putting his arms through the loops thus formed, with the beast's head downward, carries it on the back, as if shouldering a knapsack. A strap passing over the forehead may also be attached to help support the load. If the hunters are unable to carry all the game at one time the remainder is hung on the branches of some tree, to keep it out of reach of prowling animals.

224 Arrived at his settlement, the Indian merely takes his arms and paddle and walks home, sending his wife down to the waterside to fetch the game. The hair of the latter is then singed by a fire made in the open. The neighbors, who are generally near relatives, receive a share of the meat.

261 Then a big pot is put on the fire, for the Indians do not think of the morrow and, if possible, consume all the meat at once. The women and children do not have patience enough to wait until it is cooked, but they cut off small slices, which they roast over the hot coals and eat, with a few bananas or plantains. If they are unable to dispose of all the supply on the first day the remainder is barbecued without salt over a slow fire. (See Culinary Arts.)

224 777 **Hunting charms.**—Many charms are used for luck in hunting. Stones or pebbles, found in the stomach of certain animals, are

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[illegible] The large guan (*Penelope* sp.) is called *kwamu* by the Miskito, a name found already by M. W. (311) in the form *guawmees*.

supposed to attract the same species and entice it within gunshot.[illegible] 224 The bones, teeth, and skulls of animals killed in the chase are said to 777 have the same power. This explains the presence of animal jawbones, deer skulls, jaguar teeth, and plumes and beaks of birds in every hut. But they are not only preserved as charms but also as trophies, of [523] which the owner is very proud; he will always take pleasure in relating the circumstances under which he killed the game in question, and that in the most exaggerated and animated fashion. Certain objects are also worn as talismans to prevent being harmed by the spirit of the animal killed.

WARFARE

WARRIORS HELD IN GREAT ESTEEM.—These primitive people were 701 very warlike by nature in former days and all men were soldiers in case of conflict. Honors depended largely upon success in war. We know that among the Miskito brave warriors were held in great esteem. They were called *taplu* or *tahplu*, a word reminding of the term *tapaligui*, which was applied, according to Oviedo, among the Nicarao, Chorotega and Chontales to men who had won a hand-to-hand fight in sight of the armies; they were rewarded for their bravery by admission to various warrior classes.

MILITARY TRAINING.—The bow and arrow used to be the principal 702 weapon of both tribes under consideration. (See Hunting and 868 Fighting Implements.) From early childhood on the Miskito boys practiced with toy weapons made for them by their fathers. They were able to strike off arrows shot at them, with the aid of a small stick not bigger than the rod of a fowling piece, provided only one was thrown at a time (Dampier: I, 8).

Up to about 50 years ago the Sumu organized from time to time 702 great festivals, called *asañ lâwana*, in order to undergo some sort of military training and take the necessary steps to defend their territory against the invasions of the Miskito or the Spaniards. They took place in some secluded part of the forest, where no stranger was liable to intrude, but all the Sumu men from far away made it a point of honor to be present. The women were, however, never admitted, as [562] they were always connected with ceremonial impurity; they remained at an adjoining hut and there prepared the food which was carried to the festival by a number of young boys.

[illegible] There is a story current among the Sumu about a spotted variety of deer which is extremely rare. If the animal sees the hunter first, the latter will not be able to get it, as none of the shots fired at it will hit. If, on the other hand, he sees the deer first and is able to wound it mortally, the dying animal will vomit a stone; the possession of the latter will enable the hunter to kill many deer in the future. A similar virtue is ascribed by the Ladinos to the green Amazon stones or "piedras hijadas" (*Lapis nephriticus*).

702 The men taking part at the *asañ láwana* had the whole body
painted black and wore nothing but the loin cloth. They had to be
783 ceremonially "pure" (*sasu*), a condition which was obtained by
776 abstinence from women, salt, red peppers, and intoxicating liquor.
Any one daring to come to the festival in a state of "uncleanness" was supposed to be killed by an awful giant, some sort of evil spirit, which came from some neighboring hill, and walked about the house with a quiver full of arrows. He was well treated and given plenty of *pupul* (maize liquor), for every one was afraid of him.

At the *asañ láwana* trials of endurance took place in order to train
702 the young men in supporting pain without the slightest groan. They
866 also had the object of settling disputes which had been in suspense
for some time. One man leans over and lets his opponent strike his
627 back as hard as he can with the point of the elbow, until the latter
is tired of punching. He is not supposed to utter the least groan nor show any other sign of pain. From time to time he merely says *yañ al yañ*, "I am a man," whereupon his adversary replies *yañ bik al yañ*, "I am also a man." When the latter is tired of punching the two men change places and he has to submit to the same rough treatment of his back by the other. Anyone giving up the struggle before his opponent is tired of striking is considered a coward; occasionally death has resulted from the effects of these terrible blows.

This method of fighting is unknown to the Miskito. The latter
782 box a little, but it seems to be a point of honor with them to give and
526 take blows in turn, and not to try how often they can strike each
other as much as how long they can stand up to it.

Preparation of an expedition.—When the Miskito projected
726 an armed expedition against the other Indian tribes or against the
787 Spaniards they consulted one of their principal sukyas in order to hear
if they would be successful. If the sukya's prediction, after having consulted the spirits, was unfavorable regarding the issue, the intended expedition was abandoned (M. W.: 307–308).

Both of these tribes were in the habit of painting the body hideously,
714 perhaps with the object of scaring the enemy. Fair fighting was
726 unknown. Attacks were carried out during the night, the enemy
being taken by surprise.

Intertribal wars.—The Miskito and Sumu were continually at
721 war with each other as far back as the seventeenth century (Dampier: I, 9–10; M. W.: 300, 302, 305). These tribal wars continued throughout the eighteenth century and turned out to the advantage of the Miskito, who, having received European arms through the agency of the buccaneers from Jamaica, were able to conquer several subtribes of the Sumu from whom they collected tribute in the shape of canoes, deer skins, maize, cacao, rubber, etc.

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The Paya of Honduras were likewise expelled from the coast, the Miskito advancing as far as Rio Tinto, or Black River, and driving their enemies to the headwaters of the various streams. From the end of the seventeenth century on the Miskito frequently undertook raids into the territory of the Paya and exacted such large contributions of cattle or other things that the latter were obliged to steal them, at the risk of their lives, from the neighboring Spanish settlements, in order to save their families from being carried away and sold into slavery. During these excursions the Miskito took possession of the houses, wives, and children of the Paya until their demands were complied with. On account of this barbarous treatment many Paya fled to the Spanish settlements for protection (Long: I, 326–327). These incursions of the Miskito into the Paya region have continued until recent times (Young: 81; Conzemius, b: 32–33).

The Miskito not only became masters of the whole Atlantic coast line from Rio Tinto to Rio San Juan, but they carried on expeditions in seagoing canoes as far south as Chiriqui Lagoon and even beyond. These incursions were the chief cause of the depopulation of the Talamanca region of Costa Rica. The Miskito also proceeded inland up Rio Sixaula or Tiliri as far as the junction of Rio Coen and Rio Lari.

Isolated marauding expeditions by the Miskito to Costa Rica and Panama still continued practically throughout the eighteenth century. Cockburn (236) states that they invaded Chiriqui in 1732. In 1758 they are said to have been engaged in capturing Indian slaves around Bocas del Toro (Cuervo: I, 349–353). Roberts, writing in 1816, says the following regarding the encroachments of the Miskito on the territory of the Valiente Indians of northeastern Panama: "The Valientes are enemies of the Spaniards and pay a sort of tribute or acknowledgment to the Miskito King annually, which they consider in the light of a gratuitous present according to ancient custom, rather than an acknowledgment as subjects or a mark of subjugation. On more than one occasion they have refused to pay this tribute, and about 50 years ago, when a dispute took place on the subject, the Miskito King's uncle, with the whole of the chiefs and people who accompanied him, to the number of about 50 men, fell a sacrifice to their resentment (Roberts: 71).

The Miskito are even said to have gone as far as to attempt the subjugation of the San Blas Indians (also called Cuna, Tule) on the Isthmus of Panama, against whom their last expedition was sent about 1796. But the invaders, who were 300 men strong, were nearly all killed in the different engagements, and very few of them returned home (Roberts: 49–50). This is the only authority for Miskito incursions as far south as the Isthmus of Panama; the Indians them-

721 selves consider King Buppan's Bluff (Peñasco de Buppan, Frontón de Guapan), a promontory situated about 22 miles east of Escudo de Veragua Island, as the southernmost point visited by their ancestors.

721 197 Thus the Miskito acquired an ascendancy over practically the entire Atlantic seaboard from Cabo Honduras (near Trujillo in Honduras) to Chiriquí Lagoon (Panama). Their language is understood by many Indians from the neighboring tribes (Sumu, Rama, and Paya), and still plays the rôle of a *lingua franca* in certain parts of the Mosquito Coast. The part played by the Miskito in Central America in former days is similar to that of the Carib tribes of South America and the Antilles, but in the latter region the rôle of the English was taken by the Dutch.

721 103 The place names belonging to the Miskito language, which may be met with all along the Atlantic shore of Costa Rica and Panama as far south as King Buppan's Bluff, owe their origin to the above-mentioned marauding expeditions (Conzemius, a: 300–306). Still permanent settlements were not made by the Miskito on that vast region, the southern limit of their habitat being formed by Pearl Lagoon, where they established themselves during the latter part of the eighteenth century. About that same period they also spread up some of the larger rivers, as the Patuca, Guagua (Wawa), Cucallaya, Prinsapolca, Rio Grande, and especially Rio Coco; on the last-named stream they may be found as far up as Bocay, that is, about 300 miles from the sea by the circuitous course of the river.

727 567 TREATMENT OF PRISONERS.—As stated before, the Miskito began their slave-hunting expeditions into the territory of their neighbors toward the end of the seventeenth century. The captive women and children were either kept as slaves (M.: *alba*[33]; S.: *warau*) or they were sold to the Jamaican traders who arrived occasionally on the coast. The boys, when arrived at the age of puberty, were allowed to take a Miskito wife, and the children of such unions grew up as free members of the tribe.

721 Slave-hunting expeditions in seagoing canoes were particularly directed to the Talamanca region (southeastern Costa Rica), where many Tiribi (Terbi) Indians were reduced to slavery. The same fate met the aborigines living around Chiriqui Lagoon (M. W.: 302; Peralta, a: 20, 93, 95; Peláez: II, 156; Young: 35; Conzemius, a: 300–301). Many references to the Miskito slavers may also be

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[33] This word has evidently some connection with *albawina*, by which name the Miskito called the Sumu formerly, or perhaps all their Indian enemies in general. The Black Carib or Garif apply to the Miskito the name *idudu*, which word likewise had originally the meaning of "slave." (Compare *iteto* "slave" in Father Gumilla's work.)

found in the works of the historians Juarros, León Fernández, R. Fernández Guardia, Ayón, Gámez, and Vallejo.[illegible] 721

In 1722 Spain protested to the British authorities of Jamaica on account of these slaving expeditions, alleging that the Miskito had captured in the valley of Rio Matina and on Tojares Island (Chiriqui Lagoon) over 2,000 Indians (Talamancas, Viceitas, Arinamaes, Abubaes) and sold them to Jamaican traders for arms and ammunition. On October 8, 1722, Diego de la Haya, Governor of Costa Rica, addressed a note to the authorities of Jamaica for the restitution of these Indians. (Peralta, a: 20–31; Fernández: IX, 153.)

The Sumu apparently did not enslave their prisoners, but killed them outright. Scalping was unknown, but the teeth and nails were extracted from the unhappy victims and carried round the neck as trophies. Certain subtribes of the Sumu were cannibals and roasted the enemies captured in war. 727 [266]

ALLIANCE OF THE MISKITO WITH THE BUCCANEERS.—During the seventeenth century the buccaneers, who were active in the Caribbean Sea preying upon the commerce of Spain, entered into friendly and commercial relations with the Miskito, who likewise were the enemies of the Spaniards. According to Exquemelin the first buccaneer vessel anchoring at Cabo Gracias a Dios was French. The captain was well received and made a few presents to the Indians, who in turn gave him products from their fields. When he left he carried along two of these Indians in order to provide his vessel with food, having observed their great skill in fishing. The two Indians were well treated; they learned French, and after one or two years were carried back home again. From that time the French and the Miskito became friends. Indian women were given to the former during their stay at Cabo Gracias a Dios and in payment the buccaneers gave iron tools. They had no trouble in being supplied with Indian fishermen when they left for a cruise, and some of them even picked up the Miskito language. The French made the English acquainted with their new friends. Many Indians served three or four years on the vessels of the buccaneers, learning either French or English, and then were paid off in iron tools (Exquemelin, Engl. ed.: 250; French ed.: II, 262–264). 648

It would appear, however, that later the English buccaneers were more esteemed than the French. Dampier (I, 8) states that the Indians "like the English but do not love the French," while according to Sloane (a: I, p. LXXVIII) the Miskito "do not allow any other nation but the English to settle among them and that they have

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[illegible] See also Gaceta oficial de Costa Rica, 1864; A. von Frantzius, Archiv für Anthropologie, IV, 1870, p. 104; Thiel, Datos cronológicos para la historia eclesiástica de Costa Rica San José, under 1698; Restrepo, Viajes de L. Wafer, Bogotá, 1888, p. 110.

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932

SA15 Mosquito SA15

648 some propensity to the Dutch, but hate the French mortally for their wanton behavior toward their wives." The statements of these two English authors should, perhaps, be accepted with reserve.

The Miskito were of valuable assistance to the buccaneers, for they were, and still are, singularly skillful with the spear. When a party of buccaneers put to sea without provisions they steered to the feeding grounds of the sea turtle or they stopped at a lagoon where the manatee was to be found. Here two Indians set out in their own small canoe. Two Miskito were able to catch enough fish, manatee, or turtle to supply a vessel of 100 men. For that reason they were much esteemed by the buccaneers and nearly every vessel from Jamaica had a couple of these Indians on board (Exquemelin, English ed.: 250; Dampier: I, 1–2, 35–37, 160, 181, 234, 277, 453, and II, part II, 13, 109; Raveneau de Lussan: 440).[illegible]

The Miskito were not only used as fishermen by the buccaneers but they also bore arms. They were bold and courageous in the fight and they shared in the capture. Among these sea rovers the Indians became first acquainted with the use of firearms and soon proved very good marksmen (Dampier: I, 2, 8). Miskito strikers even accompanied the buccaneers in the Pacific Ocean. In January, 1681, a party of English freebooters under Sharp and Watling were anchoring at the island of Juan Fernandez in the southern Pacific, about 400 miles west of Chile. Being persecuted by three Spanish vessels they hurriedly lifted anchor and sailed away, leaving behind a Miskito named William, who was hunting in the bush at the time. This Indian lived a solitary life on the island for three years when finally he was rescued by another party of English buccaneers under Cook. The first man from the rescuing vessel jumping on land was likewise a Miskito, named Robin. Dampier belonged to the party and relates the account (I, 84–86).[illegible]

721 MARAUDING EXPEDITIONS TO THE SPANISH SETTLEMENTS.—Led by their allies, the buccaneers, the Miskito also formerly undertook incursions in the interior of Honduras and Nicaragua by ascending the larger rivers. They surprised and plundered the nearest Spanish settlements, capturing the women and children. During the eighteenth century the towns Catacamas, Juticalpa, Segovia (now Ocotal), Jinotega, Matagalpa, and some settlements of Chontales were several times entirely destroyed and some of them were then

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[illegible] Vide also Basil Ringrose, The History of the Bucaniers of America. Part II. The dangerous voyage and bold attempts of Capt. Barth. Charp, Watlin, Sawkins, Coxon, and others, in the South Sea. London, 1699, chap. XI, p. 54.

[illegible] See also Ringrose, *ubi supra*, chap. XV. The Scotch sailor Alexander Selkirk, whose adventures suggested to Daniel Defoe his famous work Robinson Crusoe, was therefore not the first or the only inhabitant of Juan Fernandez; the latter lived there from 1704 to 1709.

transplanted some distance away from the navigable rivers in order to be less exposed to attack (M. W.: 300, 302, 306; Peláez: II, 165; Peralta, b: 102, 120; Belt: 241, 255–256). In those days the products of Nicaragua were generally shipped by way of Rio San Juan, but this important waterway was often in the hands of the Indians. 721

Attacks by the Miskito on the Spanish settlements were also carried on occasionally as far north as Rio Chamelecón in Honduras; sometimes these Indians joined the English logwood cutters operating in what since has become British Honduras.

More frequently the canoes of the Miskito were directed southward toward Rio Matina in Costa Rica, where the Spaniards had established important cacao plantations during the seventeenth century. The latter had to be abandoned later, owing to the incursions of the Indians. The historians of Costa Rica devote large space to these expeditions into their territory. (See also M. W.: 302, 307, 310.) Although they ceased gradually during the latter part of the eighteenth century, acts of authority were exercised by the Miskito on that coast for some time afterwards. Still in 1838 they monopolized the fishery of the hawk's-bill turtle as far as Puerto Limón, collecting a tribute from the fishers engaged in that occupation (Cooper: 12).

THE MISKITO IN THE JAMAICAN MAROON WAR.—The Miskito rendered very valuable service to the English of Jamaica in aiding to suppress the maroon rebellion on that island. These maroons were the descendants of the Negroes and mulattoes who took to the mountains, in order to preserve their freedom, when the English in 1655 wrested Jamaica from the Spaniards. 648

On June 25, 1720, a convention was signed between Sir Nicholas Lawes, Governor of Jamaica, and Jeremy (Jeremias), "King" of the Miskito, whereby the latter engaged himself to send a body of Indians to track the revolted slaves. This treaty was formally agreed to and passed upon by the Assembly of Jamaica.

Two hundred Indians were brought to Port Royal and organized in companies under their own officers. They were paid 40 shillings a month and a pair of shoes. They remained several months and rendered valuable services to the English. A *few* years later the maroons were active again and about 1725 Capt. Robert Lade brought 100 "Muschetos" Indians to Jamaica to fight them (Lade: II, 7, etc.).

Again, in 1738, 200 Miskito were brought for the same purpose. They were formed into companies under their own leaders with white guides assigned to each company, who were to lead them to the enemy. They did good service as trackers and with their assistance the maroons were soon pressed on all sides, cut off from their provision grounds, and compelled to make peace (Long: II, 344–345; Edwards: I, 529–530).

CULINARY ARTS: METHODS OF FOOD PREPARATION

262 These Indians obtain their food from agriculture, hunting, fishing, and by gathering the wild fruits of the forest. Among the Miskito living near the coast the staple food is sweet cassava, but in the other regions of the country its place is occupied by bananas; among the Sumu maize also plays a great rôle.

252 While at home the men never do any cooking and would consider such an act beneath their dignity, but after the return from the chase they barbecue the meat which is not to be consumed immediately.

261 The Indian has an enormous appetite when there is plenty of food, especially fish and meat, at hand; on the other hand, in case of food shortage, they are able to travel and work with scarcely anything to eat.

264 SERVING OF THE MEAL.—No regularity is observed in eating, but food may be taken at any time. When the meal is ready the grown-up men are served first in their hammocks with the best and largest shares. A calabash of broth or soup (M.: *pilali;* S.: *di waeni, di waska*) and a bijagua leaf containing salt is also taken to them. The women and children eat together; they sit on the ground, forming a circle around the remainder of the food, which is spread upon a layer of large leaves. There is, as a rule, little left when the men have been served, but the women and children have taken their share previously. While the pot is boiling they crowd around the fire, and keep on eating little bits of meat together with plantains or bananas roasted in the hot ashes. The Indians do not speak much during meals; a visitor is never questioned while he is eating, as that would be a breach of etiquette.

262 [252] ANIMAL FOOD.—Meat and fish are either boiled with water or roasted in the hot ashes. The meat is obtained from the chase; the Miskito living on the edge of the savannas also own cattle which they slaughter for meat. Other domestic animals, as pigs and fowls, are seldom eaten, but are commonly sold to strangers; this is also the case with fowl eggs. The Indians, as a rule, do not care much for the flesh and products of animals of foreign origin. Certain indigenous animals are taboo. The favorite meat of both tribes is the red monkey (*Ateles* sp.) and the white-lipped peccary (*Tayassu* sp.).

262 252 The Sumu sometimes eat frogs (M.: *burka;* S.: *burka, burki*), removing their skin first in the hot ashes; to the Miskito this amphibian is taboo. Birds' eggs are eaten, even when they are practically rotten, but the eggs of the domestic fowls are not esteemed. The winged females of the leaf-carrying ants (*Atta cephalotes* syn. *Oecodoma cephalotes;* M.: *wiwi;* S.: *iedaň*) are also caught when

262

seeking new colonies; their abdomen is roasted and eaten by both tribes. 252

Small fish is wrapped in bijagua leaves and roasted in the hot ashes. 252 This procedure is the usual one while away from home when there is no cooking pot at hand. Fish prepared in this manner has an exquisite taste, for all the savor is preserved. Such a leaf parcel is called *kakati* by the Miskito and *wisana* by the Sumu. The Miskito living near the sea also fry fish in coconut oil. The latter is obtained by grating the nut and boiling the milk until the oil rises to the top, when it is skimmed off.

ANTHROPOPHAGY.—It is very probable that in former days slaves 266 captured from the enemy tribes were occasionally an article of diet among Miskito and Sumu. There is no lack of proofs that cannibalism existed among the Sumu. It was reported by Columbus in 1502 from the region between Cabo Honduras and Cabo Gracias a Dios. In 1612 the Twahka killed and devoured a party of Spaniards (Conzemius, b: 27). Later, during the second half of the seventeenth century, a buccaneer was roasted and eaten by the Kukra of Corn Islands (Exquemelin, Engl. ed.: 114). A Spanish document from 1739 or 1740 states that the Tuñla Indians used to capture Christians in order to fatten and then eat them.[30] M. W. (305) tells us that the Ulwa first drew out the finger and toe nails of their unhappy victims, while the latter were still alive, and knocked out their teeth with stones. Then they roasted them over a framework of green sticks. They considered this food the best of all.

Cannibalism was, however, probably a ceremonial custom, a 727 ritual of vengeance. 266 The body of the enemy was mutilated and cut to pieces, in order to destroy him entirely. The hair, teeth, and nails were extracted and carried as necklaces, as particularly magical virtues were attributed to these body parts. To eat an enemy was indeed considered the most profound of all insults, for by such an act he would be destroyed, not only for this world, but also for the hereafter.

PRESERVING MEAT AND FISH.—After a successful chase the meat 251 which is to be preserved for some time is placed on a low stage or framework (M.: *trin;* S.: *pala, lim*) of green sticks, and slowly barbecued by the action of a fire lighted underneath, assisted by the rays of the tropical sun. No salt is added to it. From time to time it is turned. This fire is kept up for several days, after which the meat becomes nearly as dry as our smoked beef.

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[30] Noticias estadísticas del Reino de Guatemala, Guatemala, vol. II, No. 32, Oct. 16, 1857.

251 Fish may also be preserved by drying it in the sun, after having cleaned it and rubbed salt into the scraped flanks.

252 262 VEGETABLE FOOD.—Vegetables, such as cassava, sweet potatoes, tania, yams, green bananas, and plantains, are either boiled in water or (occasionally in coconut milk) with meat or fish, or they are roasted in the hot ashes. Cassava prepared by the last-named process is called *bulbul* by the Miskito.

The fruit of the pejivalle palm is also boiled in water, after which the skin is easily removed. Inferior varieties of this fruit are generally mashed and consumed in the shape of a beverage, either soured or fermented.

A sort of bread (M.: *tani;* S.: *dipis*) is also made. Dry maize is ground on the metate with the addition of a little water. It is then wrapped in large bijagua leaves after the manner of the "tamales" of the Ladinos. A few days later when this mass has turned sour it is baked in the embers. The Sumu also bake it occasionally, immediately after grinding the maize, without allowing it to turn sour; it is then known to them by the name *pan* (from the Spanish "pan"). The Ulwa make this bread generally from unripe maize.

The pith or "cabbage" of various palms (*Attalea, Chamaedorea, Euterpe, Iriartea, Oreodoxa*) may be eaten either pickled or cooked; it is slightly bitter in taste. The pith and the small acid fruits of the pingwing or piñuela (*Bromelia pinguin* L.; M.: *aksi;* S.: *aksi, wakari*) are also esteemed. In times of scarcity the tender young bamboo shoots are also cooked and eaten.

262 177 824 The leaves of a small wild-growing plant, called cucumber or calaloo (*Phytolacca decandra* L.), are occasionally eaten as "spinach" by the Indians, who have taken this habit from the Creoles and Negroes. The common name "calaloo" for this plant savors of African origin; the Miskito call it *tilba pata* "tapir food." Indians and Ladinos use the leaves sometimes as soap, hence the local Spanish name "jaboncillo."

222 WILD FRUITS.—The Indians also collect the fruits of a number of wild-growing trees, of which the following are the most important for food: Hog plums (*Spondias lutea* L.; M.: *pahara;* S.: *walak*), nances or nancitos (*Byrsonima crassifolia* H. B. K.; M. and S.: *krabo, karabo*), zapotes or mammee apples (*Lucuma mammosa* Gaertn.; M.: *kuri;* S.: *sipul*), sapodillas or naseberries (*Sapota sapotilla* Coville; M.: *iban;* S.: *iban, sabakan*), guapinol or locust tree (*Hymenaea courbaril* L.; M.: *láwa, laka;* S.: *tipi*), several species of dwarf guavas (*Psidium* sp.; M.: *kru;* S.: *kuru, arayañ*), breadnut tree (*Helicostylis ojoche* K. Sch.; M. and S.: *pisba, tisba*), monkey apple (*Moquilea platypus* Hemsl.; M.: *purandira;* S.: *jasat*), beach or sea grape (*Coccoloba uvifera* L.; M. and S.: *waham*), icaco or coco plum (*Chrysobalanus icaco* L.; M. and S.: *tusa*) and several species of granadillas or fruits of passion

flowers (*Passiflora* sp.; M.: *drap, tutbuñ;* S.: *wahluluñ, suñsuñ, wahamtari*). 222

Ensilage.—A sort of ensilage is occasionally made by the Miskito of various foodstuffs, as green bananas or plantains and pejivalles, and by the Sumu of boiled maize. Such food is known by the name *bisbaya;* it may be kept for six months, or even longer. 251

Green bananas or plantains are peeled and buried in the ground upon a layer of large bijagua leaves and then covered up with another layer of leaves and earth. The Indians claim that no worm will get into the food when the work has been done carefully. The whole is not uncovered until required for food. The fruit retains its natural whitish color, but will turn black immediately upon exposure to the air. *Bisbaya* is consumed either in the shape of a beverage, after [272] being boiled with water, or it is baked between leaves into a sort of [252] bread (M.: *bisbaya tanka;* S.: *bisbaya pañni*). [illegible]

The fruit of the pejivalle palm, which has been stored in this [272] manner, is always taken in the shape of a drink. It is boiled again, when taken out of the soil, mashed, strained, and mixed with wabul.

The Sumu rarely make use of this manner of preserving food, except for maize. The latter is steeped in lye of wood ashes to remove the outer skin, and then buried for a few months. After being taken out of the ground it is preserved in baskets over the smoke until needed as food. These various kinds of *bisbaya* all have a very offensive odor, which may be smelled from a great distance.

Another manner of ensiling is practiced more frequently by the Sumu. Maize or bananas from which the skin has been removed are placed in running water until they partially ferment, and are then dried in the sun. For this purpose they are made into large leaf parcels and deposited in the neighboring creek. This sort of food (M. and S.: *kwakwa, lakra, tulis*) has also a somewhat disagreeable odor.

FOOD ADJUNCTS: NARCOTICS, STIMULANTS, EXCITANTS, ETC.

Tobacco (*Nicotiana tabacum* L.).—The sukya uses tobacco as a narcotic in order to throw himself into a condition of wild ecstasy; during such an abnormal conditon he is supposed to enter into relations with the spirits. He also blows tobacco smoke over the sick persons in order to purify them. 276

[illegible] Bell (b: 27) states that the Creoles of Bluefields made plantains into "foofoo," that is, cut up, put into large baskets, and buried in the earth until partially rotten, then dried in the sun and made into flour. The name "foofoo," corrupted by the Miskito into *pupu*, is now applied to green bananas or plantains which have been cooked, mashed, and formed into the shape of tamales.

276 Still, it is not certain that tobacco was known to these two tribes in pre-Columbian days. Their names for the plant (M.: *twako;* S.: *aka*) point toward its introduction by the Europeans. The Indian tribes living on the Pacific side of Nicaragua at the time of the discovery knew tobacco, however, and they smoked it in the form of cigars. Our name "tobacco" comes from the word *tabaco,* which the Indians of Haiti applied to a sort of pipe. This instrument consisted of a small wooden tube, shaped like a Y; the two points of it were inserted into the nose, while the other extremity was held in the smoke of burning tobacco, and thus the fumes were inhaled.

At the present time the plant is not cultivated by the Indians under consideration. [illegible] Leaf tobacco is imported from the United States, and this foreign product is preferred to the one raised in Central America. Among the Sumu smoking is confined principally to the men, but this practice is common enough among Miskito women and children. The leaf is smoked chiefly in pipes (M.: *twako mina;* S.: *aka pan, aka pana*), which are made locally of clay, wood, or maize cobs; imported clay pipes are also bought in the shops. According to Wickham (c: 206), the Ulwa of Rio Escondido do not smoke the pipe, but use the leaf rolled roughly in cigar form made on European models. Very few chew tobacco, while the habit of snuffing is entirely unknown. Among the females the pipe is frequently passed round, each one of the women present taking a few puffs and then passing the pipe to her neighbor. A supply of tobacco is a readily accepted currency for the acquisition of food in the more primitive parts of the country. For small favors the traveler is also expected to give one or more tobacco leaves in exchange.

263 Cayenne or red pepper.—Various species of very pungent, small red peppers (M.: *kuma;* S.: *anmak, añmak*), growing in a semiwild state on perennial shrubs (*Capsicum frutescens* L. and *C. baccatum* L.), are used with food as a stimulant and as an excitant. They were found in the Miskito kitchen during the times of Dampier (I, 9).

The Miskito usually prepare a "sauce" (M.: *kuma laya;* S.: *añmak wasni, añmak waska*) with these peppers, which they mash and then add some lime juice and salt. They store it in bottles and pour a small quantity of the liquid on their food while eating. The Sumu, on the other hand, grind the red peppers on the metate together with coarse salt. Upon serving the meal the women place a little of this mixture on a large leaf, and every one seasons his own food. These peppers may also replace salt entirely. The large "sweet" chilies (*Capsicum annuum* L.), which grow on annual plants, are also occasionally planted and eaten as a vegetable.

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Salt.—There is no record of the Indians obtaining salt from the natural salt incrustations found occasionally in the country, and which are visited by certain wild animals.

The Miskito living near the seaside occasionally get salt by boiling the water of the sea or the adjacent brackish lagoons. At the height of the dry season the lagoons are said to be even richer in salt in certain parts than the sea itself. The water is boiled in big iron pots until evaporated, and the salt remains at the bottom in the form of a cake. The Sumu living a short distance inland from Rio Prinsapolca and Brangman's Bluff employed in former days a very primitive and laborious method, which is described as follows by M. W. (302): "They make a great fire close to the seaside, which when it has well burned the sticks asunder, they make them singly, and dip the brand in the sea, snatching it out again, not too soon, nor too late; for, by the first, the drops of salt water which remain boiling on the coal would be quite consumed through too much heat, the coal not being sufficiently quenched, and, by the latter mismanagement, would be quite extinguished, and want heat to turn those drops of water into corns of salt, which, as fast as made, they slightly wipe off with their hand into a leaf, then put that brand's end into the fire again, and take out the fresh ones successively, that in half an hour's time a man makes about a pound of grey salt."

In practically all the Central American languages the names for salt and sea are identical. The Miskito have, however, no native name for salt and call it by the Spanish word *sal*, while their term for sea is *kabo*.[a] The Sumu call both sea and salt *kuma*, which latter name the Miskito apply to red peppers or chilies.

Substitute for salt.—The Sumu of the interior make a substitute for salt from the ashes of the midrib of certain palms, in particular the pacaya or mountain-cabbage palm (*Chamaedorea* sp.; M.: *silina;* S.: *tapal*) and a smaller, spiny species, known by the Indian name *kakka*. The ashes are collected in a vessel with hot water, in order to dissolve their contained salts. After removing all impurities, the solution is evaporated in a large earthen vessel by boiling it down over a slow fire, whereby a whitish crystalline matter becomes deposited, which furnishes a good substitute for salt. This method was observed by the Franciscan missionary Fernando de Espino in 1667

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[a] *Cabo* is the Spanish name for "cape," and the phrase "El Cabo" is used for short for the settlement Cabo Gracias a Dios situated at the mouth of Rio Coco. On the strength of this it has been claimed by some that the Miskito were originally an inland tribe, who had no knowledge of the sea, and that they first saw it when they emigrated from the interior down the Rio Coco to El Cabo, adopting therefore this latter name to designate that great water sheet. This explanation is of course unsatisfactory.

263 or 1668 among the Indians (Sumu or Paya) living around Rio Guampú in Honduras.[*]

VANILLA.—Sloane (a: p. LXXVIII) gives an account of the method practiced by the Miskito in curing vanilla (*Vanilla planifolia;* M. and S.: *diti bánia*). The present-day writer has not observed that the Indians make any use of the pods, except in flavoring a drink prepared from cacao and maize.

249 263 177 ANNATTO.—Annatto (M.: *dúlala, tmariñ;* S.: *awal*) is cultivated chiefly for the face pigments furnished by the red coloring matter surrounding the seeds; it is not used as a condiment, except in isolated cases, where this habit has been introduced by the Ladinos.

252 COOKING OILS.—The kernels contained in the seeds of various palms are made into oil, which is occasionally used in the kitchen. The most important one is that extracted from coconuts. The nut is grated and then boiled, the oil being skimmed off as it rises to the top. The seeds of the corozo (*Attalea* sp.), hone or oil palm (*Elaeis melanococca* Gaertn.), huiscoyol (*Bactris horrida* Oerst.), and the kahka palm are also opened occasionally to extract oil from the kernel. Cooking oil is also furnished by the red fruits of a forest tree (M.: *yari;* S.: *yara*), and by a small shrub called *wari-klua* by the Miskito.

263 SWEETENING FOOD AND DRINK.—Previous to the introduction of sugar-cane the Indians had to rely upon ripe bananas or plantains and wild honey to sweeten certain food beverages. Now sugar-cane juice is boiled into sirup or brown sugar. As soon as the juice has been squeezed out it is poured into a large pot on the fire; as the heating progresses a scum arises which is skimmed off with the aid of a calabash shell pierced with holes and attached to a long stick. When sufficiently thick the brown liquid is poured into bottles and kept until needed. For the making of sugar the juice has to be boiled somewhat longer; finally it is poured into wooden molds where it crystallizes.

VARIOUS.—The round berries of the allspice tree (*Pimenta officinalis*), which grows wild in the forest, are gathered, dried in the sun, and used to flavor certain beverages.

Black pepper and cinnamon have also been introduced into the native kitchen; both of these commodities are bought in the local shops.

276 The chewing of coca, which was a current habit among the Nicarao of the Pacific coast of Nicaragua at the time of the conquest, appears to have been unknown on the Mosquito Coast.

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[*] "Hacen sal de unos árboles que hay en aquellas montañas, a manera de coyol o coco; rajan este árbol, hasendo astillas, quemanlo, hacen ceniza, hacen de ella legia; esta en una olla grande la echan, sola la legia sin la ceniza, y a fuego manso la van calentando hasta que se convierta en sal; es muy blanca, pero no tan fuerte como la que usamos." (Serrano y Sans: 368.)

The eating of earth (M.: *tasba*; S.: *sau*), clay (M.: *slikbla*; S.: *sau*), sand (M.: *auya*; S.: *kiskimak*), and charcoal (M.: *kwasko*, *twasko*; S.: *kusmak*) is very common among women and children. 261

NONFERMENTED BEVERAGES

Drinking water.—The whole country is well watered and the Indians obtain their drinking water from the running streams on the banks of which their settlements are generally situated. Wells are also dug by those living near the sea. 312

Water lianas.—Several varieties of water lianas, varying in size from 3 to 5 inches, can be found throughout the forest. When the stem is merely cut through only a few drops of water will issue; the vine must then be severed immediately about 2 or 3 feet farther down, whereupon a continual stream of water will flow, quite sufficient to quench the thirst of a person. The Indian holds the severed part of the stem in a vertical position, allowing the sap to run directly into the mouth. The vine must be cut above first, otherwise the sap will ascend so rapidly that hardly any will be obtained.

Honey.—The Indians are very fond of the honey (M.: *nasma*; S.: *amak*) from the various species of wild, stingless bees which make their nests in hollow trees. The entrance to the nest is easily ascertained by watching the little bees flying about. The Indians either climb or fell the tree in order to get possession of the honey. The latter is always taken as a beverage, after being mixed with water, but even in its natural state it is not viscid, but almost as fluid as water. It has a subacid, highly fragrant taste. The Indians, while away from home, may make a meal of the contents of such a bee nest, but the average foreigner does not care much for it, and finds it greatly inferior to that of the European domesticated bee. The natives collect in bamboo joints what they are unable to consume immediately to take home to their family. 222

Milk.—The consumption of cow's milk is not general. When I inquired the reason from some Sumu of the upper Rio Waspuk they answered that they are not the descendants of cows, to drink their milk. 272

Bananas and plantains.—A great variety of nourishing drinks of vegetable origin are prepared by the Indians under consideration. Bananas are consumed largely in the shape of a pop, known locally by the name "wabul." The bananas for this purpose are used generally in the green state, before their contained starch has turned into sugar. They are peeled and cooked in an iron pot. Then the water is poured off and the bananas are thoroughly mashed in the same pot with the aid of a short wooden stick. During this process cold water is added little by little, and the whole is well stirred. No salt

272 is added. Wabul is served generally between the meals; if a stranger arrives at an Indian village the women will immediately prepare some of this beverage for him. Rarely do they offer any to a white man unknown to them, as uneducated foreigners have at times refused with disdain the wabul offered to them. The drink is always served in calabashes, which are the drinking vessels of the Indians. Ripe bananas and plantains are also used occasionally in making wabul, but green plantains are too tough and hard to mash. If, instead of cold water, cow's milk or coconut milk is added to the fruit, the flavor is greatly improved, and the beverage is appreciated by the average foreigner.

The Sumu living on Rio Patuca are very fond of a beverage made from ripe bananas, which are cooked, mashed, and then allowed to remain for a day or two in a large earthen vessel, until this mass has turned sour. In case the bananas have been only half cooked the drink will be light yellow in color, and it is then known as *pihbra* (*pi* or *pih*, abbreviated from *pihni* "white"). If, on the other hand, the fruits are well cooked the resultant drink will turn dark red, and is then called *wakisa pauni* "red bananas." The Miskito name for either one of these two beverages is *paunlaya* "red drink."

Oil palm.—The fruits of the indigenous "hone" or oil palm (*Elaeis melanococca* Gaertn.), called *ohoñ* or *uhuñ* by the Indians, are boiled in order to liberate the red pulp surrounding the seeds. This pulp is then passed through a calabash pierced with holes like a collander and mixed with wabul. This is a most agreeable and nourishing drink, which is prepared only by the Miskito, for the oil palm does not grow inland in the region inhabited by the Sumu. It is the same palm from the seeds of which the Miskito prepare the well-known hair oil, called *batana* on the Mosquito Coast. The drink has been praised by Raveneau de Lussan[38] (438–439) and by M. W. (308), but neither of these two authors mentions it being consumed except together with wabul, as is the case with the Miskito of the lower Rio Coco at least. This beverage appears to be mentioned by Exquemelin (Engl. edit.: 251) under the name *achioc*.

Maize.—A number of nourishing drinks are prepared from maize. One of the most common is the one called "pinol" by the Ladinos (M.: *ayuñka*; S.: *am bokol, am tok*). The grain is toasted over a charcoal fire until it begins to "pop"; it is then ground on the metate and kept until needed. For use it is mixed with clear water and sweetened with sirup made from sugarcane, or with wild honey. The drink is cooling and refreshing, but as the maize is not finely ground, the dry particles occasion a tickling sensation in the throat.

On the upper Rio Coco and on Rio Bocay the Indians are very fond of another beverage (M.: *wasplu*; S.: *wasbol*) prepared from maize. The dry grains are ground and cooked afterwards; a small quantity of sprouted maize is then added, which imparts a slightly sweetish taste to the drink. It is consumed either fresh or after having been allowed to turn sour.

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[38] This author calls it *hoco*.

Atol (M.: *aya-makala;* S.: *kuri, am-tunun-ba, ama-tunani-ba*) is a very refreshing beverage which the average foreigner will appreciate. The young or green grains are cut off from the cob with a knife, after which they are passed through a sieve, and the drink is ready. It has great favor among the Ulwa especially. A similar beverage, but inferior in quality, is prepared from old maize; it is called *ulañ* by Miskito and Sumu. If the latter drink is allowed to turn sour it is known as *aya swahni* (M) "sour maize" and *dipis* (S).

Pozol (M.: *pusul;* S.: *sâua*) is also consumed occasionally, and has apparently been introduced by the Ladinos. This drink is made from the "masa" or paste prepared by treating maize with lye and grinding it upon the metate. It is generally taken unsweetened.

CACAO.—An excellent food drink is prepared from cacao by the Sumu, especially by the Ulwa subtribe. The beans are roasted slightly over a charcoal fire and the outer integument is removed. They are then ground upon the metate together with a large quantity of toasted maize. For use about two teaspoonfuls of the powder and a little sirup are added to a calabash of water and the mixture is agitated for a few moments with the "molinillo." The resulting drink much resembles the chocolate of the Ladinos in consistency and taste, but it is of somewhat gritty character, due to the presence of the ground maize. Sometimes the drink is adulterated with the parched and ground kernels contained in the seeds of the scomphra palm, the pejivalle palm, or the zapote; it may also be flavored with vanilla and cinnamon. M. W. (308) observed this beverage among the Miskito and states that in those days it was sweetened with ripe plantains and wild honey.

BUNYA OR SOURED DRINKS.—These Indians are very fond of consuming vegetables in the shape of a beverage after they have been allowed to turn sour. This is especially the case with cassava, tania, sweetpotatoes, yams, and pejivalles. After being boiled in water, these foodstuffs are mashed; the resulting paste is then wrapped up carefully in large waterproof leaves, tied with rough withes or vegetable fibers, and attached to the rafters of the hut. Bijagua leaves are generally used for this purpose, as they are tougher and not as liable to split as banana or plantain leaves. Such food is known to the Miskito as *bunya,* and to the Sumu as *tapañ;* the Miskito of the interior, however, employ the Sumu name when the ingredients are not cassava. The Sumu also prepare maize in this manner; they cook it and then grind it upon a stone, so that it has the consistency of a thick paste.

Such soured food is always taken along on a journey. If the Indian wants to quench his thirst or hunger he stops at a running stream, 272 places a handful of the thick paste in a calabash, and mixes it thoroughly with water. In the case of maize or pejivalles the thick skin is first squeezed out with the hands and thrown away.

INTOXICATING BEVERAGES

273 Bacchanalian orgies play an important part in the semireligious carousals and in the social life of the two tribes under consideration. Fortunately for themselves the Indians seldom have the means to buy spirits at the rum shops and their homemade drinks consume too much of their provisions to be indulged in frequently.

Distilling.—The Indians do not appear to have known how to distill, but before the arrival of the Europeans they knew how to get drunk on a number of fermented beverages. Aguardiente or rum (M.: *tahpla;* S.: *tapalni, tapalka,* lit.: "bitter") may be obtained by the Indians in the local shops. In Honduras and Nicaragua the manufacture of this spirit is a government monopoly, which is farmed out to contractors, generally political supporters of the party in power. There are many private illegal stills in the less accessible parts of these republics, which are operated chiefly by Ladinos. Levy (b: 300) states that the Ulwa of Rio Escondido distill an alcoholic liquor from cassava with the aid of an inform earthen still; the latter probably corresponds to the one depicted by Belt (233) from the neighborhood of Santo Domingo (Chontales) at the headwaters of Rio Escondido. I have met a similar simple apparatus among the Paya of Honduras. In these two cases, however, it served for the distilling of sugar-cane juice or brown sugar. Belt (233–234) describes such a "sly grog" manufactory as follows: "It consisted of two of the common earthenware pots of the country, one on the top of the other, the top one having had the bottom taken out and luted to the lower one with clay. This was put on a fire with the fermented liquor. The spirit condensed against the flat bottom of a tin dish that covered the top vessel, and into which cold water was poured, and fell in drops on to a board, that conducted it into a long wooden tube, from which it dropped directly into bottles."

Fermented drinks.—A great number of fermented drinks are prepared by these Indians. They are known locally by the general name mishla (M.: *misla;*[*] S.: *wasak*); distinctive names are, however, given

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[*] This name (*michela, mishlaw, mushelaw*) appears to have been formerly restricted by the Miskito of Cabo Gracias a Dios to a beverage prepared from ripe bananas or plantains, either boiled or roasted (Exquemelin, French ed.: II, 268; Dampier: I, 314; M. W.: 307). Lionel Wafer (A new Voyage and Description of the Isthmus of Panama, London, 1699, pp. 154–155) gives the name *mislaw* for an unfermented beverage prepared from ripe plantains. None of these seventeenth century authors mention the use of cassava for this purpose, although they list it among the food plants of the Miskito.

273

to the beverages made from maize. They are all prepared on identical lines, the ingredients only differing in each case. These various drinks are stored in large earthenware vessels or in casks of foreign manufacture; the Miskito of the seventeenth century also used canoes for this purpose, as do the Paya of to-day (Dampier: I, 10).

(a) CASSAVA.—Among the Miskito and some of the Sumu the most important of these beverages is the one made from sweet cassava (*Manihot palmata* Muell.); its preparation does not differ essentially from that of *kava* or *kawa* among the Polynesians. The root is first peeled and cooked, then mashed or merely cut in small pieces, and finally thrown into a cask or a large earthenware vessel (M.: *sumi;* S.: *suba, sau suba*). Hot water is added and the whole is then covered with large leaves, the heat causing it to ferment. A small quantity of the root is chewed by the women, until thoroughly saturated with saliva, and then spat out again in the vessel in order to activate fermentation. The latter process may also be accelerated by the addition of sugar-cane juice and even by drum beating. From time to time the mass is stirred and skimmed with the aid of a paddle-shaped thin stick, for it effervesces like must. Fermentation will be complete in two or three days. The beverage looks much like buttermilk, but it is sourish in taste. Its toxic power is not very great, but the Indian consumes such a large quantity that he finally falls down on the ground, completely drunk.

(b) OTHER VEGETABLES AND FRUITS.—The above receipt may also be used with sweetpotatoes, yams, tania, or eddoe, and the fruits of the pejivalle plam and the breadnut tree.

The fruits of the cashew and other trees, as bananas and plantains, are merely bruised, with the addition of water, allowing the juice to take its own time to ferment. The most potent drink is the one prepared from roasted pineapples, which has been mentioned already during the second half of the seventeenth century by Dampier (I, 10) and M. W. (308). Sugar-cane juice may be added to these various beverages in order to augment their potency.

Pure fermented sugar-cane juice is extensively consumed in certain regions, especially by the Indians living on Rio Patuca. The juice is merely squeezed out with the aid of a simple hand mill, and fermentation may be assisted by adding to the liquid a small quantity of a leguminous vine (M.: *mak, snik;* S.: *sinak*), which bears small bean-like pods.

(c) MAIZE.—Among the Sumu maize (*Zea mays* L.) takes the place of cassava as the chief ingredient for the favorite alcoholic drink. The Sumu and the Miskito of the interior make a number of beverages from this grain. The most potent of them is called *puput* by the Twahka and Panamaka and *sili* by the Ulwa, but it is unknown to the Miskito; it is reserved for the great festivals, such as the *sau* and the *asañ-lauwana*. Dry maize is ground on the metate, wrapped in large leaves after the manner of the "tamales" of the Ladinos, and thus cooked in boiling water. It is then kept for weeks or months over the smoke of the fire, whereby it becomes covered with a grayish mold, which accounts for its name (*puput* "gray").[illegible] A few days previous to the celebration of the feast the mass is taken out of the leaves, crumbled and cooked with a small quantity of water; it is then poured in a hole made in the ground over which a provisional shed has been erected. A thick layer of bijagua leaves or of balsa bark prevents the beverage from coming in contact with the ground. In two or three days fermentation will be completed and then the drink is ready for the palate. Before being served this potent liquor is strained and mixed with water.

Another intoxicating drink (T., P.: *mahkrus;* [illegible] *pi tuhdey*) is made as follows: Either dry or green maize is ground on the stone, wrapped in leaves and boiled in water. Afterwards when this mass has cooled off a little, it is chewed by the women, and then left to ferment. From sprouted Indian corn a similar drink (M.: *aya urwan;* T.: *am uus;* P.: *ama uus;* U.: *am patañ*) is prepared, but it is not chewed nor wrapped in leaves. Among these Indians the latter drink is also sometimes known by the general Spanish name chicha (*sitsa*).

(d) PALM WINE.—Occasionally the sap from various species of palms, as the coyol (*Acrocomia vinifera* Oerst.) and the cohune or corozo (*Attalea cohune*), is left to ferment. The tree is felled and a concavity is cut into the stem, just below the crown of leaves. In about half an hour's time the sap will be found collecting in the hole, scarcely any of it running out at the butt, where the palm has been cut off. The sap may be taken fresh, but it is generally allowed to ferment, which process will be completed in two or three days. This "wine" is of a clear yellowish color.

(e) OTHER FERMENTED DRINKS.—Exquemelin (Engl. ed.: 251) gives the name *achioc* to the most common fermented beverage of the Miskito of the seventeenth century, which he describes as follows: "It was made from a palm seed, bruised, and afterwards steeped or infused in hot water, till it be settled at the bottom. This liquor being strained had a very pleasant taste, and is very nourishing." The seeds referred to are probably those of the oil palm from which a nonfermented drink is prepared to-day. (See Nonfermented Beverages.)

Levy (b: 300) states that the Ulwa of Rio Escondido also prepared fermented beverages from the tender annatto seeds and from

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[illegible] Crévaux (Voyage dans l'Amérique du Sud, Paris, 1883, pp. 405–406) gives the receipt for a maize drink from the Guianas which is prepared on identical lines.

the pulp surrounding the wild cacao (*Theobroma bicolor* ?). This same writer (b: 308) likewise mentions a drink made from coconuts; it was sweetened by the addition of ripe plantains or wild honey. 273

GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

There is no trace of any division in clans or exogamic kinship groups. The tribal organization of these primitive tribes was essentially along democratic lines. 621

In former days the Miskito do not appear to have been ruled by a supreme chief, except during war time, when a commander was chosen by an assembly of the old men, in order to direct the military operations (M. W.: 307). The choice fell generally upon a warrior celebrated for his prowess. According to Exquemelin (French edit.: II, 264) preference was given to an Indian who had accompanied the buccaneers, but with the restoration of peace his authority ceased. 624

In the legends of the Miskito there are records of individuals seizing the powers of government by violence. The insignia peculiar to a chieftainship seemed to consist of a wooden scepter and of a metal breastplate depending from the neck. The powers of the numerous priest-doctors (*sukya*) were also very great, but it is not known just how much they intervened in governmental affairs. It appears, however, that occasionally the temporal and spiritual heads were both centered in the same person. 622 554

Hereditary chiefs did not rule the Mosquito Coast until after the establishment of British influence. One of these chiefs, a Miskito, was later raised to the rank of king; he became a tool in the hands of his foreign protectors, with whose aid his nominal authority was extended over the larger part of the coast. A silver crown and a scepter of little intrinsic value were bestowed upon him by the British authorities of Jamaica. The rule of the Miskito "king" was absolutely despotic. His orders were carried out by his quartermasters (*kwatmas*); the latter carried a cane or staff, which symbol of authority was apparently introduced by the English or Spaniards. A silver medal, sword, or anything else known to belong to the king would also do. Such a token established the credibility of the bearer and an immediate compliance with his orders. Foreign traders also applied to the king for such an object which served as a passport; every Indian was compelled to render him assistance, lodge him, sell him food, and furnish him with the means of continuing his journey, against reasonable pay. That the Indians of the interior did not pay much attention to such commands need hardly be told. 643 648

Besides the king, there were three other important rulers among the Miskito, who governed comparatively large areas and were known as "general," "governor," and "admiral." Numerous minor 624

624 chiefs, called by the Miskito name *wita* or *wihta* (lit.: "head"), resided in the larger villages.

648 Now the government of the two republics, Honduras and Nicaragua, is represented by *comandantes*, who are invariably Ladinos. Indian *subcomandantes* are occasionally named in the larger areas, but their authority is practically insignificant. Some deference is also paid by the Indians to the elders of the settlements, and especially to the sukya. The officials despatched from Tegucigalpa or Managua are rarely of the better element, and have at times committed great abuses among the timid and peaceful aborigines. They are too frequently men of low morals who try to enrich themselves by imposing fines upon the Indians, which are put into their own pocket, or by compelling the natives to work for their personal benefit.

LAWS: CRIME AND ITS PUNISHMENT

627 Administration of justice.—In former days the punishment of criminals was intrusted to the individual wronged rather than to special officers of justice. If the injured person did not take any steps to revenge himself he was considered a coward.

177 692 681 Toward the middle of the eighteenth century, when British influence spread to the "court" of the principal Miskito chief, special officers, known by the name *kwatmas* (from the English "quartermaster") were intrusted with the execution of government orders and the administration of justice. Punishment was inflicted in the shape of fines, flogging, and death by hanging; prisons were unknown. On their periodical visits these officers used to whip all the young people whom they could seize, in order to cure them of their laziness and stinginess, apparently whether they were guilty of the charge or not. This was called "teaching the people" (M.: *upla smalkaya;* S.: *mõih sumalnin, mõih sumalnaka*) and had the object of inculcating principles of good conduct and morality. An account of such proceedings is given by Bell (b: 278–282).

685 Theft.—A thief was compelled according to Indian law to restore twice the value of the stolen object.

847 Infanticide.—This was apparently not considered a crime in former days under certain circumstances. (See Children: Their Birth and Education.)

683 Bodily injury.—For any bodily injury, whether done intentionally or not, a payment of "blood money" (M.: *tala mana;* T., P.: *a minit;* U.: *awas makalnak*) was collected.

682 Murder.—A murderer had to follow his victim into death. If he should not do so voluntarily, the relations of the murdered man might kill him without risk of punishment; besides, in that case, his memory would be dishonored. The *lex talionis* was applied rigidly.

Poisoning is nowadays the usual method of disposing of an enemy. 674
The poison is administered in rum or fermented drinks, with the aid of a third person, when the intended victim is intoxicated. This method of killing has been rather common in recent years. As poison the Indian uses some strong native drugs, alligator gall, or even cyanide stolen from the gold mines. The Miskito from Rio Coco are supposed to make frequent use of poison. If the Indian [682]
kills his enemy with the aid of a gun, arrow, or knife, he will have to follow him into death, but such does not appear to be the case when poison has been administered.

Adultery.—Morality is at a low ebb, particularly among the 684
Miskito, and most of the disputes and crimes that occasionally take place are the results of quarrels about women. The injured husband inflicts a severe beating on his unfaithful wife or attempts to choke or drown her in order to make her tell the name of the other delinquent, from whom a payment (M.: *mâirin mana;* T., P.: *yal minit;* U.: *yal makalnak*) is exacted. Such a "woman payment" consists generally of a cow or a gun. Otherwise wife beating is not common. Occasionally a woman has committed suicide for having received a [762]
sound beating from her husband on account of her unfaithfulness, and the latter was then compelled to pay up to her relatives. Bell (a: 251) states that he had known men keeping wives for the sole purpose of the revenue derived from their misconduct.

Debt.—If a debtor refuses to pay up or to return or refund the 686
object or money borrowed, the creditor might go to his plantation and pay himself with provisions without risk of punishment. If such a debt can not be collected in an amiable way, the creditor, instead of wrangling with the debtor, might destroy some property belonging to a third person. Pressure is then brought to bear upon the debtor and he has to make good the damage done.

Various.—Sometimes an Indian who had been grossly insulted 762
and was unable to collect payment would commit suicide, whereupon 628
the offender had to do the same. This system led to complicated cases, and the following has been recorded by the Moravian missionaries. A Miskito woman, being continually mistreated by her husband, ran away from him. The latter then proceeded to the house of his parents-in-law, where he was told that his wife, unable to endure his barbarous treatment any longer, had hung herself. The man understood what that meant and committed suicide without hesitation. Then the woman, whom every one had believed dead, returned to the village. But now the relations of her husband wanted her to commit suicide also for having caused the latter's death by her flight from home. As the unfortunate woman hesitated, not having the courage to do what was asked of her, her husband's relations seized her and hung her to the nearest tree.

628 These acts of vengeance were not considered as murders but as duly merited punishments, wherewith a crime, supposed or real, had been expiated. Thus one murder was often the first link of a long chain of similar crimes, as the relations of the first victim considered themselves compelled, according to the Indian custom, to put the murderer to death.

762 Suicide was generally committed by hanging or by discharging a loaded gun in the throat. No one would prevent a person from taking his own life under the above-mentioned circumstances.

674 There is in general little crime among the Indians and the life and property of foreigners is respected; several cases of piracy, that is, the plundering by the Miskito of vessels wrecked on the coast, have been recorded, however (Bard: 160; Bell, b: 294; Wickham, b: 204).

CHARACTER

157 The Indian, as a rule, is very frank and outspoken, silent, phlegmatic, honest, and reliable, but also somewhat revengeful and ungrateful and inclined to drunkenness.

Even among their own kindred the Indian will show great reserve upon the first approach, but after a while this changes, and soon they will relate to each other the details of their respective hunts and travels.

Stinginess is considered the worst of all vices, and the foreigner who is very liberal in bestowing small presents among them is soon known far and wide as a "good man" (M.: *wâikna pâin;* S.: *al yamni, al yamka*).

461 All these Indians are somewhat inclined to laziness and are fond of passing whole days in their hammocks. Still one must admire their great patience, skill, and endurance in hunting and fishing. They are able to paddle in the hot sunshine for 10 hours a day, making only a short stop at noon in order to prepare their meal.

157 Much patience must be observed during the relations with the Indians, and self-control is considered by them as one of the cardinal virtues. If a laborer has been insulted by his employer he will generally keep up with his day's work, or the time he has been contracted for, without showing any perceptible sign of dissatisfaction. At the expiration of his engagement he will ask for his time, without giving any reason, and later apply somewhere else for work. The Indian has little respect for the newcomer who indulges frequently in sudden outbursts of temper.

578 As a general rule these Indians are not quarrelsome, especially the men. But once a difference has arisen between the women, the most obscene and vulgar language is used without interruption for whole

hours. During this time the quarrelers follow their usual occupation; 578
from time to time they appear at the doorway in order to make themselves better heard. One tries to overtalk her adversary, picking out the weak points in the personal appearance, habits, and morals of the other. They, however, seldom come to blows. During this time the men remain passive onlookers, as they are not supposed to interfere in such quarrels. They will, nevertheless, attempt to persuade their wife to desist from the vulgar language and prepare the next meal.

Contact with foreigners is rapidly modifying the character of the 177
Indians; it has made them less shy and easier to approach, and more 157
hospitable, but on the other hand has made them more pretentious and less reliable and trustworthy. It has introduced begging among them, a practice which was formerly unknown. The more primitive [431]
Sumu even to this day will never ask a stranger for a present, and if the latter should offer them a leaf of tobacco or the like they will promptly give him some article of food in exchange. The Sumu, if [577]
unwilling to answer a question, will simply say *talnas-yañ*, "I do not know," or they will give an evasive answer, but the Miskito will frequently turn to a deliberate lie. The childish preference for anything foreign is also the result of contact with the white man.

The hybrid Miskito differ greatly in character from the pure Indians, owing to their large admixture with Negro blood and their long association with foreign traders and settlers. They are rather noisy, bold, daring, adventurous, self-assertive, arrogant, and up to the present day they are prone to domineer over their more gentle and peaceable neighbors. In former days some of the Sumu, Paya, and Rama were subject to the "King" of the Miskito, to whom they had to pay a sort of tribute in the form of dugout canoes, cattle, and other articles. The ascendancy of the Miskito over the other tribes of the Mosquito Coast began about the latter part of the seventeenth century, after the former had become acquainted with the use of firearms through the agency of the buccaneers. The Miskito even undertook in the following years marauding expeditions to the coast of Costa Rica and Panama, in order to enslave the Indians and plunder the cacao plantations of the Spaniards.

PERSONAL NAMES

The members of the same family address each other generally 551
according to age and sex as father, mother, husband, wife, son, daughter, elder brother, younger sister, etc. The infant does not receive any individual name until some peculiarity of appearance, manner, habit, or character has been observed.

551 177 These old Indian names have now practically been superseded by Spanish or English names. On the coast English names seem to be preferred, but in the interior nearly all the names are taken from the Spanish language. The Indian generally takes only one name, which may be either a Christian name or a surname; from time to time they change it. A well-known Miskito of Rio Patuca, the owner of many cattle, even took the name "Honduras."

Foreigners traveling on the Mosquito Coast are frequently asked by the Indians to name their youngest child. It is often difficult to find a name which is acceptable to them, as they do not want any which is already found in the region. M. W. (304) tells us that at the end of the seventeenth century the most prominent Miskito all had names given to them by the buccaneers; every one of the adventurers stopping at the coast was asked to give a name to one of the Indians, and the latter thought that the same buccaneer could not well give a name to more than one Indian.

551 The mentioning of a deceased person's name is taboo among all the tribes under consideration, and it is a direct insult to mention it in the presence of his relatives.

551 177 But at no time does the Indian like to be addressed directly by his name. It is therefore often difficult to find out their real name, especially of the women, who are generally known as So-and-so's wife, daughter, mother, sister, etc. In former days this was the case with the men, too, but owing to their working in the mahogany camps, gold mines, and other enterprises, where they had to give their name in order to be distinguished from the other laborers, this aversion has gradually disappeared. While in charge of a mahogany camp on Rio Coco I had great difficulty at first in obtaining the names of new laborers, especially of the Sumu. They would invariably tell me that they were the son of So-and-so, or they gave me the name of the village they hailed from. However, if there were other Indians present one of the latter would promptly answer my question by telling me the name of the particular Indian I had addressed.

601 The series of relationship words, by which the members of a family address each other instead of proper names, is very complicated among the Miskito, and may be replaced by a whole new series when a death occurs in the family. Husband and wife call each other *mayi* "my consort." Before any child has been born to them the husband often calls his wife *kika* "girl," while she calls him *wahma* "young man." After the birth of the first child they often call each other *luhpi yapti* "my child's mother," and *luhpi aisa* "my child's father," respectively. After the death of a child they apply to one another the name *sukrika*. The words *mahma* or *masa* are frequently used to address a son or brother, while *kika* or *misis* are the forms of address for daughter or sister.

Old men and women should always be addressed as *dama* "grandfather" and *kuka* "grandmother" among the Miskito, the use of their personal names in talking to them being considered very irreverent. 601

Two men or two women may exchange their names, or merely some sort of personal property, in form of friendship, as a pledge of perpetual amity; they then call each other *libra*. This habit is common among the Miskito and is also found occasionally among the Sumu. Such friends are as dear to each other as brothers, and an Indian may trust his wife with perfect safety with his *libra*. 572

SALUTATIONS

Common form of salutation.—Handshaking (M.: *mihta sibaya;* T., P.: *tiñ isihnin;* U.: *tiñ isihnika*) constitutes now the general form of salutation, but this habit seems to be of foreign introduction. When two Indians meet the one will say: "How are you?" (M.: *naksa,* abbreviated from *nahki sma;* T., P.: *parasta;* U.: *yampara*), while the other replies: "I am well" (M.: *ãiñhwa sna;* T., P.: *yammi lik yañ;* U.: *yamka yañ*). When they take leave, the Miskito will say to each other *ãisabi*, contracted from *ãisabya* (for *yawan kli ãisabya* "we will speak again"), which corresponds to the Twahka *yulbãudarãñ*. The Twahka will, however, more frequently make use of the general form of salutation *parasta* upon separating, whereas their kindred say *kaltaldarañ* (P.) and *kaltalwarañ* (U.), that is "we will see you again." 576

Upon Indians returning from a prolonged absence their female relations will sit down in a corner of the hut, throw a cloth over their head, and begin to cry with a dirgelike song.

Reception of visitors.—There are no communal houses for the reception of strangers; the latter are generally directed to the dwelling of the headman or sukya. Visitors arriving by canoe may give notice of their approach by blowing a conch shell. If a party of Indians arrive at a settlement where the men are absent they do not land unless they have near relations there, but they talk with the women from the canoe. 574

In former days the reception of a stranger or visitor appears to have been of a more demonstrative nature than now. Exquemelin (English edit.: 252), referring to the Miskito of Cabo Gracias a Dios, states that "the host goes a distance of three or four hundred steps out of his hut to receive his guests, and upon their approach he lies down flat upon his face without any motion, as if dead. The guest then lifts him up and together they go to the festival. Here the guests in turn lie down, and the master of the house lifts them up one by one and with his hand leads them into the cottage to a seat." This form has been out of use for many years. Nowadays the host does

514 not go out to encounter his visitor, but receives him with a handshake in his hut or at the doorway.

Among the Sumu (Twahka and Panamaka) I have observed occasionally that the guest walks into the house of his host without speaking a word. The latter then addresses him with the words *dìwana man* "have you come?" to which the other replies *dìwana yañ* "I have come." He is then motioned to one of the low wooden seats or to a hammock. The master of the house then calls his wife or daughter to bring him some wabul or other beverage or food. If the guest is well known to the women they will decry the drink or food offered, while the guest is supposed to praise it. If they do not know each other the wabul is brought without the exchange of a single word. The visitor is never questioned while he is eating, as that would be a breach of etiquette. When he has finished with the food the master of the house will inquire where he comes from and what brought him to his dwelling. He generally asks him also if he saw plenty of game on his journey and if the latter is lean or fat. When the visitor departs he merely says *yawa yañ* "I am going," and he goes, while the host replies, almost laconically, *yawa man* "are you going?"

201 Kissing.—Among these Indians kissing is absolutely unknown. They manifest their affection by merely smelling the scent of the other person, rubbing their nose against the latter's cheek with a snuffing action; this custom prevails in large areas of the world. Parents rub their nose against the face, neck, or body of their baby, inhaling the scent as in snuffing, but they never touch the child's skin with their lips. The words "to kiss" or "to smell" are translated by the same phrase (M.: *kia walaya;* T., P.: *waya dakanin;* U.: *wiñka dahnaka*), which literally means "to hear the scent." Among the Sumu (and the neighboring tribe of the Rama as well) our manner of kissing is abhorred and looked upon as a mild form of cannibalism.

TIME RECKONING

211 Pyu or Peruvian quipu.—Primitive forms of the complicated *quipu* of Peru are in existence among both Miskito and Sumu. They consist of a single cord with knots and are called *pyu* or *piu* (S.: *ma*), a word which is etymologically related to *quipu*. When the Indian departs for a voyage he gives his wife a string or cord with as many knots therein as the number of days he expects to be absent, each knot corresponding to a day. The woman severs one of these knots every night, and in this manner she knows at a glance at the *pyu* how many days her husband will still be absent, for the latter arrives, if well, on the very night on which the last knot is cut off. When

the Indian is working as a day laborer he will keep track of his time 211 by tying a knot in a string every evening, and finally compares the total of the knots with the amount of days credited to him by his employer. These small cords also take the place of cards of invitation for a great festival. One of them is carried by the messenger to the headman of each one of the invited villages. Each night one of the knots is severed, the last one representing the day of the meeting.

Instead of knotted strings there are also other systems of *pyu*, as, for instance, tablets or pieces of wood on which notches have been cut with a knife, or wherein small holes have been drilled for the reception of thin sticks. The women also make use of calabashes in which they place or from which they withdraw a small pebble every day. Each one of these notches, sticks, or stones signifies a day.

The presence of these simplified *quipu* among the Miskito and 211 Sumu has already been observed by Roberts (270) and by Sapper (c.: 265). Similar systems may be found among the Talamanca 171 tribes of Costa Rica and in many parts of South America and Oceania. Very complicated systems are known only from the ancient Peruvians; in their elaborate *quipu* the knots varied in value according to their coordinate placing. They were used for calendary calculations and also for statistics.

DAYS.—Great distances from one place to another are expressed 805 by the number of "sleeps" or nights that one will have to sleep on the journey.

The approximate time of the day is not observed from the length of the shadow, but directly from the position of the sun. The Indians will point to the heavens and indicate the approximate position of that celestial body at the time at which a certain action took place.

YEAR.—The Indians calculate the year according to the return of the dry season, or summer; both the words "year" and "dry season" are expressed by the same word (M.: *mani;* T., P.: *kure, kuri;* U.: *mamaka*). The approach of the rainy season, or winter (M.: *li mani, li tāim;* S.: *wasma*), or the dry season, is known from the behavior of the animal and vegetable world. Very few Indians are able to give their approximate age. The great eruption of the Cosegüina in 1835 formerly afforded a convenient reckoning period to start from.

MONTHS.—The year was formerly subdivided into 13 months or "moons" (M.: *kati;* S.: *wāiko*) of 29½ days each, corresponding to the average duration of a lunar revolution. As it was known, however, that the solar year corresponds to considerably less than 13 lunar revolutions, the thirteenth month was occasionally dropped in order to keep the moon in adjustment with the seasons. Nowadays

805 the year of 12 months has been adopted. The names of the latter are the following:

Month	Miskito	Twahka and Panamaka
January	*Aladi kati* "New Year's Day month"	*Aladi wâiniko.*[1]
	Mani raya kati "New year month"	
	Inupu kati "guácimo (bastard-cedar) month."[2]	*Inípu wâiniko.*
February	*Kuswa kati* "tortoise month"	*Kowa wâiniko.*
	Islu kati "garrobo (or ishwilly lizard) month."	
March	*Kakamuk kati* "iguana month"	*Kama wâiniko.*
April	*Wli wâintka kati* "male-turtle month"	*Wili almuk wâiniko.*
	Kut prâidi kati "Good Friday month"	
May	*Wli mâirin kati* "female-turtle month"	*Wili yal wâiniko.*
	Pisba kati, tisba kati "masica (or breadnut tree) month."	*Pisba wâiniko.*
June	*Lí kati* "rain month"	*Wasma wâiniko.*
	Pupu wihta kati "Pleiades month"	
	Yahurus kati "wild-cane month"[3]	
July	*Pastara kati* "high-wind month"	*Dapa wâiniko* "wild-cane month."[3]
August	*Sikla kati* "sikla month"[4]	*Sikla wâiniko.*
September	*Wis kati* "wis month"[5]	*Tiwis wâiniko.*
October	*Sâut kati* "south-wind month"	*Saut wâiniko.*
	Prari kati "hurricane month"	*Prari wâiniko.*
November	*Yahbra kati* "north-wind month"	*Yahbra wâiniko.*
December	*Krismas kati* "Christmas month"	*Krismas wâiniko.*

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[1] *Aladi* is corrupted from the English "holiday."

[2] This tree flowers in January.

[3] The wild cane flowers in June or July.

[4] A migratory bird which arrives in August.

[5] A migratory bird which arrives in September; it is a species of flycatcher (*Tyrannus intrepidus*).

The behavior of the elements, the opening of certain flowers, the maturing of certain fruits, the song of certain birds, and the spawning time of certain animals, each in its season, are thus the almanac of the Indians.

902 **Numeration.**—The numeral system is vigesimal, but in Honduras both Miskito and Sumu count by tens also (vide Conzemius, d: 81–82). High numbers are now generally expressed in English or in Spanish but in former days this was done by the word "many, much" or by a handful of sand or hair.

MUSICAL AND SIGNALING INSTRUMENTS

The music is chiefly instrumental; vocal music is seldom heard, 533 and is chiefly performed by the sukya in practicing his incantations.

Drum.—Our common drum, known by its English name (M.: 534 *drum;* S.: *durum*), is the favorite musical instrument among the men; it has been extremely popular ever since its introduction by British garrisons during the eighteenth century. The Indians make it themselves and beat it at their drinking bouts with the aid of the wooden drumsticks (M.: *mihta;* S.: *tiñni*).

The horizontal hollowed-out log drum with an H-shaped cutting made longitudinally (the *teponatzli* of the Mexicans and the *tunkul* of the Maya), which is used for signaling purposes in different parts of America and Melanesia, appears to have been unknown in the region under consideration. The common drum is sometimes used to advise [202] the neighbors of a misla feast.[51]

The upright native drum (M.: *kuñbi, kuñbaya;* S.: *pañtan, panatañ*) is goblet shaped and hollowed out from a solid block of mahogany or cedar; it has a height of about 3 feet at least, including the pedestal base, which is carved from the same block of wood. The smallest diameter is at the bottom just above the pedestal support. The drumhead at the top is formed by a piece of animal skin (deer, toad, iguana, or tapir); it is held taut by means of a strong rope which is attached to the pendent edges of the skin and firmly tied to the shell of the drum. It is beaten with the hand and used only at the festival of the dead. This instrument corresponds to the *huehuetl* of the ancient Mexicans.

Rattles.—Round or egg-shaped gourd rattles, the common playthings of our babies, figure among the musical instruments of the Mosquito Coast, and are found in use all over the New World. They are handled chiefly by the women, particularly at the festivals of the dead, in order to mark the measure at the dances. These rattles are made from the fruits of the calabash tree, from which the pulpy contents have been removed through a circular opening at the stem; small stones, pebbles, hard seeds, or beans are then introduced. Finally, a close-fitting stick, which acts like a handle, is introduced; it tapers somewhat toward the distal end, which is thrust entirely

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[51] The foreigners living on the Mosquito Coast jokingly use the phrase "bush telegraph" to refer to the rapid way in which news sometimes travels, but there is no such mysterious way used by the Indians. It is claimed that the Miskito living on the savanna near the sea occasionally spread news by the signal of making a savanna fire. But such a signal could not be very definite as these fires are generally kindled for no purpose but to burn the grass and low thicket. Sometimes men from villages far apart come within shouting distance of one another when hunting. It is also claimed that some men have a "whistling [198] language," and are able to communicate any sentence correctly by whistling.

534 through the shell, emerging through a small hole cut just opposite the stem end. With other specimens the handle does not pass through the calabash, but it is firmly attached to it by means of fiber strings passed through various perforations drilled in one end of the gourd. The seeds strike the inner wall of the thin shell and the central handle axis, resonating somewhat like castanets.

Wind instruments.—Flutes or flageolets (M.: *bra;* S.: *bara*) are in common use. They are about a foot in length, and are provided with two, three, or four finger holes. Beeswax is applied to the mouthpiece. They are made from a species of bamboo known by the Miskito name *bratara*.

Short 1-toned flutes are also made from the femoral bones of deer, tapir, or other large animals. They are used to lure the agouti by imitating the voice of that rodent, and from the purpose they serve are called *kyaki wasbaya* (M.), *malka kuñinin* (T.), *malaka kuñinini* (P.), or *malka kuñkana* (U.).

Several flutes are used exclusively at the festivals of the dead. A small flute (M.: *limi-mina, limi-dusa;* S.: *nawa-wakal*) is made of jaguar bone and has the mouthpiece covered with beeswax. Another short flute (M.: *yul*) is made from the thin *klisañ* reed. Stout bamboo flutes, measuring up to 6 feet in length, with one end resting on the ground, are blown by the sukya. This instrument has a mouthpiece of bird skin and beeswax and has a number of lateral ventholes; it produces a loud noise not unlike the roaring of wild beasts.

Panpipes are unknown in the country under consideration. Pottery whistles are no longer manufactured, but a few specimens have been unearthed in the Rio Tinto (Honduras) region.

Conches (M.: *kiptaya;* S.: *masi*) are used as trumpets throughout the Mosquito Coast.

Jew's-harps (*yusap*) were introduced many years ago and are in great favor; they produce but few tones, but the music sounds sweet and soothing and has a great charm for the Indians.

Musical bow.—The musical bow (M., S.: *luñku*), the only stringed instrument known in ancient America, produces a plaintive sound and is occasionally played by the Indian women. It is formed of a small wooden bow, chiefly of split bamboo or other tough pliable wood of 2 to 3 feet in length. Both ends of the bow are connected by a thin string of pita or silk grass. The bow is pressed against the mouth, which acts as resonator, and the string twanged by means of a pick of wood. Harrower (47) collected a large specimen on the Mosquito Coast in 1924 with a gourd for a sounding box and a string made of a heavy liana.

534 More complicated systems are found in other parts of Central
America, but practically always among the Indians. In 1919 the
171 writer saw at Ocotal (Nicaragua) one of these instruments in the

hands of an Indian from the neighboring village of Cuje, who called it "quijongo" or "sambumbio." It was at least 5 feet in length and 1½ inches thick. A little from the center the string was tied back to the arc with the aid of another thread, so that two strings of unequal size were formed. This instrument could produce a great variety of tones. In Olancho (Honduras) I saw later a bow of equal size but with a calabash resonator; it was called "caramba" there. The gourd was fastened with the mouth downward at the convex surface of the arc, at the same point where the cross string had been attached to the wood, that is, about one-third the distance from one end. The Rama of Nicaragua also call this instrument *luñko,* while among the Lenca of Honduras it is known as *bumbum;* it is also found among the Kekchi of Guatemala, and was known to the Island Carib of the seventeenth century, according to De Poincy. 534 171

In spite of the fact that in Central America the musical bow is limited to the pure Indians, it is supposed to be, like all other stringed instruments, of foreign origin. The various names by which it is known in Central America savor of African origin. It is also found in certain regions of South America and has a wide distribution under different forms in large areas of Africa and Melanesia.

Other instruments.—Violins, guitars, accordions, and harmonicons may be found in certain regions; they are chiefly of German manufacture. Instead of beating the drum or shaking the rattle, the Miskito occasionally clap the hands together at the dances in order to obtain a rhythmic effect. 534 177

AMUSEMENTS: SONGS, DANCES, STORY-TELLING, GAMES, AND SPORTS

Songs.—The Sumu rarely sing (M.: *áiwanaya;* T., P.: *áiwannin, áiwannini;* U.: *unbáinaka*), but the Miskito sing occasionally when they are either sad or happy. All their songs are soft and plaintive, and they all sound alike to the stranger, who is unable to distinguish the gay songs from the sad ones, unless he has lived some time among the Indians. The sukyas of both tribes sing upon practicing their rites of incantation, but owing to their intermingling of many old and obscure phrases, these songs are unintelligible to the other Indians. 533

I was unable to collect any indigenous song, but Young, Fellechner, and Bell have been more fortunate than I. In these songs appear many phrases not used in general conversation. Fellechner (268) obtained a number of songs which were apparently composed in an antique form of the Miskito language, for the interpreters were unable to give the meaning of many parts of them. Most of this material has never been published. The following specimen is that 539 of a Miskito from Cabo Gracias a Dios upon going away and leaving his sweetheart behind; it is given in German and Miskito (Fellechner: 268):

I will go far away from you,
Very great is my sorrow.
I am going to get beads for you,
Cloth will I bring back.
The east wind is blowing strong;
Your name I will sadly call.

The following song is found by Young (77–78) in English and Miskito:

Dear girl, I am going far from thee.
When shall we meet again to wander
Together on the sea side?
I feel the sweet sea breeze
Blow its welcome on my cheek.
I hear the distant rolling
Of the mournful thunder.
I see the lightning flashing
On the mountain's top,
And illuminating all things below,
But you are not near me.
My heart is sad and sorrowful;
Farewell! dear girl,
Without thee I am desolate.

Here is another specimen of a love song, recorded by Bell and published by him in English (6: 89) and Miskito (6: 312):

My girl, some day as you walk with your companions,
When the mist settles over the river mouth,
And the smell of the pitch-pine woods comes from the land,
Will you think of me and say:
"My lad, have you really gone away?
Alas! my lad, have I seen the last of you?
Shall I really never hear your voice again?
    Alas! alas! alas!"
My girl, I am very sad for you,
I remember the smell of your skin.
I want to lay my hand on your lap,
But here I am lying under a tree.
In my ear I only hear the noise of the sea.
The surf is rising in the offing;
But I cannot hear your voice.
    Alas! alas! alas!

Bell (b: 301) gives the following English version of a dirge, sung by the Miskito Queen-Dowager on Rio Coco upon the return of her daughters, who had been for some time at Bluefields:

Oh, my children, you have come back to me;
I was lonely without you.
Other women had their children. I saw them,
And my heart was sore with longing for my daughters.

> In the night I thought of my dead boys; 539
> They called me "Mother!"
> I thought I was alone, and had no children.
> I remembered my daughters,
> But they were far away among the white people,
> My children have come back.
> My heart is like the young plantain-leaf,
> That shoots out when the sun shines.

DANCES.—Dancing (M.: *dans pulaya*,[42] T.: *dans pulnin;* P.: *abanini, danis pulnini;* U.: *abanaka*) is practically limited to the various festivals and had perhaps originally a religious significance. Certain rejoicings of the Miskito, at which dancing takes place, are called *li-siksa* (lit.: "black water"), and others are known by the name *plamana;* the latter are celebrated in honor of some one who is leaving for a long journey. 535

The women perform individual dances which do not lack a certain grace; they place the hands upon the shoulders or the head and make various contortions of the body as they walk or jump around.

Some dances of rejoicing have been introduced by the Negroes or Creoles, and are performed chiefly around Christmas, which is considered a period of merrymaking by all these Indians, whether evangelized or not. The festivities last about two weeks. A great circle is formed with men and women alternating and joining hands or placing the right hand upon the left shoulder of their neighbor; in the center are seated one or two men beating drums, and at the rhythm the circle moves around. 535 177

STORY-TELLING.—The telling of stories is one of the favorite ways of passing the long hours at night before going to bed. The old Miskito, who lived under the good old days of the "Mosquito Kingdom," are always glad to talk of their armed expeditions into the "Spaniard's" country (Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica), and to relate some bizarre exploits in connection with those wars. The Indians can relate an occurrence in the most animated manner, but they do not seem to invent tales or stories as do the Negroes. 538

When the Indian has returned from a hunting or fishing expedition he delights in giving a most detailed account of everything he noticed in the course of the day, even if nothing out of the ordinary occurred. He will give all the particulars regarding the game he saw, and relate in a most tedious manner how he succeeded in outwitting it and getting within gunshot of it. The narrator may keep on in this manner for hours, while his patient listeners occasionally interpolate an exclamation denoting their astonishment, surprise, doubt, agreement, or comprehension.

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[42] The word *dans* or *danis* is taken from the English.

539 Occasionally the old men tell about mysterious tribes which formerly inhabited the country. The following account of the Wiswis Indians was told to me in 1918 by the Miskito Ramón of Burimak (upper Rio Coco):

THE WISWIS LEGEND.—On the left bank of Rio Coco, near the present settlement of Saulala, there used to live a subtribe of either Miskito or Sumu.[63] Having once killed a great number of *wiswis* birds, they become known by the latter name. They refused to pay tribute to the king, and for that reason the latter treated them cruelly, and had them whipped frequently.

One day, while they were out hunting, they killed a number of wild hogs (*wari*), and cut some withes of a variety called *dar*, in order to tie the legs of the animals together and secure the latter on their backs. As soon as they had fastened the withes they could not see the peccaries any longer, although they were able to smell and to feel them. One of them then untied the withes and immediately the animals became visible again. This Indian then tied one of the withes round his own neck, whereupon his companions could not see him any longer. They now realized that the *dar* withe has the property of rendering invisible anything tied with it.

The Wiswis were glad of having made this discovery, and they decided to put it to practical use. When they heard of the king's envoys coming in order to collect the taxes they tied some of these withes round their houses, and the tax collectors were unable to find them or even locate their villages.

In spite of this sorcery the Wiswis were unable to escape the wrath of the king. In order to get away from their oppressive ruler they emigrated toward the interior, wandering overland through the vast savanna, which extends on the left bank of Rio Coco uninterruptedly to Rio Kahka (above Auasbila). From this latter place they are said to have reached Bocay eventually, but no one knows how; some claim, however, that they crossed over to Honduras.

Two rows of little cairns, which stretch in a straight line from Saulala to Rio Kahka, are attributed to the Wiswis. The latter are supposed to have placed them on both sides of their road during their long march inland. These tumuli are from 10 to 16 miles away from Rio Coco; from the village Auasbila it takes about half a day's march to get to them. They are still known among the Miskito by the name *Wiswis kawan* "placed by the Wiswis."

524 GAMES AND SPORTS.—The little boys play war and hunting games with toy bows and arrows; the latter are tipped with a wooden knob or with beeswax. Kites (M.: *istapla*), spinning tops (M.: *purmaya*,

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[63] Lehmann refers to the *Vivises* as a cannibal tribe of unknown origin, which settled at the Mosquito Coast about the twelfth century. These people finally departed, but no one knows whither (Lehmann, b: 716; c: I, 463).

pareaya), stilts (M., S.: *umas*) and marbles may occasionally be seen; the spinning tops may be of foreign manufacture, or they are made by the Indians from large seeds through which a stick has been passed. String puzzles or cat's cradle, a common game of our schoolboys, has been observed by the writer among both Miskito and Sumu, but unfortunately he neglected to record any of them. Already Wickham (b: 160; c: 207) records "scratch cradle" among the Sumu of Rio Siquia and notices very rightly that these Indians carry it into far more complicated passages than we do.

Hide and seek is known, and the "tiger game" is especially popular. In the latter, one of the boys is supposed to represent the tiger, that is the jaguar or the puma, and he hops around on all fours, imitating the gait and voice of that feline. The other children stand in a file, each one placing the hands upon the shoulders of the one in front of him. The biggest boy is leading while the smallest one is at the rear end. The "tiger" attempts to catch one among the row, but the boy in front outwits him by dashing immediately to the threatened spot. All the time the group keeps on calling "tiger is coming" (M.: *limi dida;* T., P.: *nawa kâwe;* U.: *nawa waya*).

Another game, called *wii pulaya* "playing turtle" is described by Bell (b: 151) as follows: "One boy is chosen as the turtle, and swims away to a fixed distance from the rest; then at a signal, he dives, and the other boys try to catch him. As the water of the (Bluefields) lagoon was usually a little muddy from the dashing of the small waves on the half-mud, half-sand of the beaches, it was not easy to see the diving boy in, say, 5 feet of water; besides which they were skillful divers, and could keep long under water. The boy dives to the bottom, and keeps to it. Drawing up his right leg, he buries his toe in the sand, and kicks out violently, sending his body flying along the bottom, to rise finally to the surface in some most unexpected position. The 'turtle' waits to rest till his pursuers are too near, then dives again, and possibly shoots between them, rising to blow far behind them. Finally the 'turtle' is caught and brought to the captain or quartermaster (*kwotmas*) of the boys, who is supposed to kill it by slapping with the palm on the top of the head."

In another game, called *ilili pulaya* "playing at shark," the diving boy, representing that fearful fish, stealthily dives among the others, and pinches or bites them under water. This is a favorite game, which fun and fear combine to make very exciting (Bell, b: 152).

Wickham (b: 160; c: 200–201) states that the Ulwa of Rio Escondido "have a singular mode of playing with staves or short poles, which they grasp in the middle, and then, standing opposite each other, holding them at arm's length, strike each end alternately together with all their force. The opponents are matched in pairs, and in appearance it rather reminds one of the old English quarter-

526 staff play. The object of the game is to see which can keep up longest the continual strain upon the muscles of the arm, and ultimately strike the staff from the hand of the other."

HYGIENE: DISEASES AND THEIR CURE

515 Most of the Indians keep themselves very clean and take a bath twice a day in the river adjoining their settlement. As they wear but little clothes this is a very simple operation with them; they keep their body cleaner than do the lower class of the Ladinos, or of the white race in Europe, where the clothes are frequently the main source of dirtiness.

514 When the Indian goes to stool he always takes to the water, drifting down the river until he comes to a secluded spot, where he can perform this operation in privacy. When finished he cleanses the body with water.

515 The presence of dogs and pigs in the huts is responsible for the great quantity of fleas to be found there. In spite of the great care devoted to the hair, the latter is frequently full of vermin, and it is not an uncommon occurrence to see at the villages rows of women picking off one another's lice and crushing the troublesome insects between the teeth—a most disgusting sight.

164 MALARIA.—A swelling of the spleen and anemia are common enough and are undoubtedly the result of malaria (M.: *wrih;* T.: *ware, warai;* P., U.: *yama, yamah*),[66] which is endemic in the lowlands, although rarely fatal. The transmitting agent of malaria is a mosquito of the genus *Anopheles*, which is very common.

751 For malarial fevers infusions from the bark of certain trees are administered, especially that of the copalchí (*Cinchona* sp.). Instead of sudorific bush medicine, quinine is also administered nowadays. The fever or lemon grass (*Andropogon nardus* L.) is also used for this purpose. The sudorific is followed by a steam bath. The stricken person is enveloped in tunu blankets, and water is thrown on some large heated stones placed at his feet; he then inhales the thick vapor or fumes produced thereby. This part of the treatment is excellent, for it induces perspiration; but as the patient is then taken to the riverside and forced to take a cold bath pneumonia is often the result.

Among the Sumu the patient is carried to one of the numerous hot springs (*daka*) which abound in their territory, and immersed therein, or he is buried up to the armpit in the hot sand at the edge of the pool.

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[66] These names were formerly used by both Miskito and Sumu as a general term for most other maladies, but nowadays the Miskito have adapted the word *siknis* (Engl. "sickness") in the latter sense.

Skin infections.—Cutaneous infections are very common in certain regions, a fact already recorded by Exquemelin (French ed.: II, 277), who visited the Miskito of Cabo Gracias a Dios; they are the result of ignorance of the most elementary principles of hygiene. 164

A certain skin disease, which starts by a burning or swelling of flesh, is said to be caused by the urine of an insect, which, like the disease itself, is called *mastukra* by the Miskito. [753]

A specific ulcer, resembling cancer, and known locally by the name "bay-sore" (M.: *lasa kraũisa* "the devil is boring"; S.: *pilau, tamak*), is sometimes caught by Indians and Negroes. It breaks out on face, arms, and legs, and is generally attended with very acute pain. It is cured by powerful caustics, or applications of a corrosive nature. The common ulcer, abscess, or carbuncle is called *yukri* (M.) and *suru* (S.).

Various other bad skin diseases may be found in certain regions; they are known by various names (M.: *yats, kliñkliñ, kuswa-ãuya;* S.: *una*).

A cutaneous affection, sometimes taken for leprosy (which is rarely met with), is very common among both tribes. It is known by the names *bulpis* among the Miskito and *mara* among the Sumu; the Spanish-speaking Central Americans call it "bienteveo," "carate," and "mal del pinto." It occurs in white, red, and black blotches; for that reason the Ladinos refer derisively as *gente pintada* "painted people" to the ones afflicted with this disease.

Ringworm (M.: *sus, sihiri, bulpis twaknira;* S.: *mara paũ, mara titis*) is also met with among the Indians. Small warts (M.: *sisrama;* S.: *titismak*) also occur on the hands.

Painful sores may also be caused by the jiggers or chigoes (*Sarcopsylla penetrans*), a sort of flea, which is very common during the dry season but disappears gradually at the beginning of the rainy period. This insect lives on the ground and is especially common around the dwellings where pigs are allowed to roam. It burrows itself under the skin and toenails of man and animal to deposit its eggs. If the latter be taken out immediately with a disinfected needle or the point of a knife, the wound will heal without further care.

Minute ticks cover every bush during the dry season. They fix themselves to the body of man and animal and bury their head in the skin. Sometimes they cause painful inflammations.

Yumu, or stomach ache.—This state of ill being is very common among the Miskito and appears to be merely some sort of indigestion due to overeating. The Indians believe that it is caused by the spirit of an animal which has entered the body of the sick person. This may have taken place by eating a piece of the animal in question, or by being scared at the sudden appearance thereof, while being out in the bush. Thus if the agouti (kyaki) has caused the ill the latter 164 753

164 753 will be known as *kyaki yumu-ka*. The Sumu have apparently taken this belief from the Miskito, and they have no distinctive name for the ill; the Rama of Nicaragua call it *yakuki*.

755 The sukya cures this illness[1] after its source has been revealed to him in dreams, for the treatment differs slightly according to various animals which have caused it. But in all cases the belly of the patient is strongly massaged with animal grease (also vaseline, coconut oil), while the sukya keeps on continually a low whistle in order to induce the spirit to depart. Among the Christianized Miskito there are also some people who heal *yumu* by similar methods; they are known as *yumu yabaka uplika* "people curing yumu."[66]

Women *enciente* may occasionally suffer from *kwihra yumu-ka* "pregnancy yumu"; the child is supposed to die then invariably, unless the sukya applies a treatment.

164 751 OTHER INDIGENOUS DISEASES.—Dysentery (M.: *taldura;* S.: *ba-pau*) occasionally appears in the form of an epidemic; it is generally cured by the administration of an infusion from the bark of the nance tree (*Byrsonima crassifolia* H. B. K.).

To cure diarrhea (M.: *byara plapaya;* T., P.: *ba lanin;* U.: *bawas lanaka*), the favorite remedy is an infusion prepared by boiling the bark of the mountain guava tree or the seed of the zapote or monkey apple. The Sumu also boil the rootstock (M.: *labu;* S.: *sara*) of the black or Ulwa banana.

According to the investigations carried on by the Rockefeller Foundation, hookworm is found on about 75 per cent of the Indian population living around Matagalpa. There is no doubt that it is also common among the Indians of the Mosquito Coast. Hookworm is seldom fatal, but there is progressive anemia and frequently interference with mental and physical development, causing occasionally premature death.

Children especially seem to be infected with intestinal parasites, as may be seen from their color and their enormously swollen belly; this is largely due to their habit of eating earth, charcoal, and the like.

164 753 755 Rheumatism (M.: *kyaialáuwaya, dusa láuwaya;* S.: *wakal dalanin, wakal dalanaka*) is supposed to be caused by thorns or fishbones which have been introduced into the flesh by evil spirits. The sukya pinches and kneads the afflicted spot, then makes a small incision with a glass splinter and, applying his mouth to the wound, he sucks a little and finally produces a prickle or bone, which he had carefully hidden between his teeth.

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[66] Ziock (162) gives *yumuk* as the Miskito name for a native doctor curing with medicines. In the Carib dialects of Surinam and adjacent regions *yumu* is the name for some sort of spirit.

[1] [i.e. yumu, or stomachache, see cat. 116, pp. 119-20 - Analyst]

Wickham (b: 160–161; c: 205) states that the Ulwa used to cure 164
pains in the limbs by flogging the aching part with a kind of nettle, 757
until the skin became raised in bumps.

A disease of the eyes, perhaps trachoma, called *ûkri bâikan* by the 164
Miskito, is prevalent; it does not produce total blindness, but causes great pain. Foreigners appear to be immune to it.

Venereal diseases, as syphilis (M.: *mâirmanka;* S.: *pildû*) and gonorrhea (M., S.: *iskadora*), are only met with in the larger villages at the coast. Anthropologists and the medical world seem, however, to agree now that syphilis is of American origin.

Yellow fever likewise is undoubtedly of New World origin, and was formerly endemic in certain parts of the Central American lowlands. In the sparsely populated country under consideration, however, no authentic case of yellow fever has been recorded. Perhaps the transmitting agent, a species of mosquito (*Stegomyia fasciata* syn. *Aëdes* sp.), is absent. Black water fever is also unknown. Leucorrhea is, however, very common. Indians suffer seldom from hemorrhoids (M.: *slabla dâiwaya;* S.: *sarani putulnin, saraka putulnaka*), which swelling is prevalent among whites residing in the country.

FOREIGN DISEASES.—Europeans have introduced among the 164
Indians a number of distressing maladies formerly unknown to them,
and against which they had not the slightest immunity. Although 177
strong and robust, the Indians are especially subject to infections by the germs of diseases generated by large communities.

Epidemics of our common catarrh (M.: *syahka;* T., P.: *ohdana;* U.: *nañtak iwanaka*) have occasionally caused great havoc among the Indians of the interior.

Whooping cough (M.: *ikya;* S.: *duk*) appears occasionally as an epidemic among children, whereby many of them die.

Influenza or grippe also occurs periodically as an epidemic. It seems to have been brought to the country for the first time in 1807–08 by some Miskito returning from the logwood and mahogany camps of British Honduras. Consumption is also found sometimes, especially among the Sumu.

Measles and smallpox were brought to the New World by the first conquistadores and facilitated the subjugation of the Indians. Epidemics of measles (known by the Spanish name "*sarampion*") are responsible for many deaths; this disease was already observed at Cabo Gracias a Dios among the Miskito during the latter half of the seventeenth century (Exquemelin, French ed.: II, 277). Smallpox has on different occasions decimated entire villages, but since the middle of the nineteenth century has not appeared on the Mosquito Coast. Wickham (b: 204–208) gives an account of the last epidemic of Asiatic cholera which swept the country in 1867 and 1868.

000 last epidemic of Asiatic cholera which swept the country in 1867 and 1868.

752 SNAKE BITES.—Guaco (*Mikania* sp.) is one of the various plants used as an antidote to the virulence of snake bites, not only by the Indians but by the Ladinos and Creoles as well. In order to neutralize the venom, the sukya also administers an infusion prepared from the bark and leaves of a leguminous shrub or small tree, called *daka*, while the *brum sirpi* weed is applied externally. The patient must abstain from eating food of which snakes are supposed to be fond. A woman *enciente* must under no condition be seen by the patient, otherwise the latter will die.

278 BUSH MEDICINES.—The Indians know a great number of bush medicines (M.: *sika;* T. and P.: *panbas, panabas;* U.: *dibasta*) for external or internal use. Many native plants and trees are employed, the bark, roots, leaves, and seeds being utilized. The white, delicious resin of the copal or incense tree (*Protium* sp.), copaiba balsa (*Copaifera officinalis* L.), Peru balsam (*Myroxylon pereirae* Klotzsch syn. *Toluifera pereirae* Baill.; M. and S.: *bakus*), the gum of the locust tree (*Hymenaea courbaril* L.; M.: *laũa, laka;* S.: *tipi*), ipecacuanha (*Uragoga ipecacuanha* or *Polygala costaricensis*), sarsaparilla (*Smilax officinalis*), and unguents prepared from the oils extracted from the seeds of various trees are employed in the treatment of certain infections and sores.

The yellow milk of a small tree, known locally as "samboo gum" or "leche baría" (M.: *samu;* S.: *paũmaba*), is applied in poultices for rheumatism; it is also said to cure the *bulpis* skin disease, when the latter is still in its first stage.

The seeds of the piñon (*Jatropha curcas* L.; M. and S.: *pisik*) and the antidote bean (*Fevillea cordifolia* L.; M.: *mukula;* S.: *mula*) are administered as an emetic and as a purgative. The medicinal properties of the castor-oil plant (*Ricinus communis* L.; S.: *unapalan*), which grows wild on the river banks, are well known. De Candolle, however, believes this plant to be of Old World origin; curiously enough, the Miskito have no native name for it.

Toothache is cured with the milk of the cachito tree (*Tabernaemontana donnell-smithii* Rose; M.: *buksa mahòra,* S.: *wako*); the latter is also used for skin troubles.

An ill-smelling herb reaching about a foot in height and known as fit weed (*Eryngium* sp.; M. and S.: *kisaũri*) is used for snake bites and epileptic fits. The Ladinos call it "culantro" (coriander) and use it as a condiment, but it must not be confounded with the true coriander (*Coriandrum sativum* L.), which is cultivated sometimes in Central American gardens under the name "culantro de Castilla."

The roots of the cerrón cantil or baraja (M.: *sus saika;* S.: *tata, daka, tisliñ*) enter into remedies for venereal diseases. The bitter-

378 wood or hombre grande (S.: *wanabaka*) is said to be efficacious in case of snake bites.

The woody rootstock of the China root or cuculmeca, a sort of French brier (S.: *samalâi*, *wasalanaka*) is boiled in water and the decoction is used to clean the blood, and as a preventive against snake bites.

The small "beans" contained in the pod of the pissabed or frijolillo shrub (M.: *siñsiñnya*) are toasted, ground, and used as coffee on account of their diuretic properties; the root of this plant is employed in malarial fever.

The large round leaves of the cowfoot or Santa Maria bush (M.: *sikatara;* S.: *kalamata*) enter into poultices for a swelling of the flesh, while spider webs are applied to wounds in order to stop bleeding. Wild honey is also used in medicine.

756 PRESUMED CAUSE OF DISEASES.—The cure of the sick is practically always left to the sukya; the latter is generally a clever herbalist, and the treatment applied by him is often excellent, but the remedy in itself is considered of no avail unless certain rites are observed by the healer as well as by the patient.

753 According to these primitive people, indigenous diseases and accidents are always due to the agency of some evil spirit (M.: *lasa;* T., P.: *walasa;* U.: *nawal*) under whose power the sick person is supposed to be. The mischief-maker may send a snake or a jaguar to harm the intended victim, or cause a tree to fall upon him, or cause his canoe to upset, or bring about some other calamity and ill luck. Thus toothache is supposed to be caused by a worm (M.: *sûkri, sisi*) that has been sent by these evil powers to bore the tooth. People walking in their sleep are said to be possessed by demons. Epilepsy is also caused by the temporary possession of the individual by such evil spirits; hence fits are called by the Miskito *wlasa prukaya* "to be beaten by the devil." For the cure of this disease a decoction prepared from the *kisauri* herb is said to be very efficacious.

This evil influence may be counteracted through the agency of the sukya who manages to exorcise the spirit from the sick and then brings about a complete cure.

756 DIAGNOSIS.—Through the use of narcotics, especially the excessive use of tobacco, the sukya throws himself in a condition of wild ecstasy, and goes into trances and hypnotic states. During such an abnormal condition he is supposed to be in relation with friendly spirits whom he had invoked previously, and who reveal to him the source of the illness and the mode of cure.

HEALER'S INSIGNIA.—The insignia or kickshaws of a sukya during a cure are three or four black hardwood sticks with carved heads and several magic stones and dolls or manikins of white tunu cloth. Stone axes, which are regarded as thunderbolts, figure also among the

156 paraphernalia of these doctors, small specimens being considered more efficacious than large ones. One of these celts is wrapped around the aching part of the body in order to relieve pain. In case of stomachic troubles the sukya administers drinking water wherein such a celt had been deposited for some time.

155 **Treatment.**—The sukya heals generally in the dark, especially after sundown. His methods of approach are prescribed by custom. First he imposes a general fast or perhaps only minor restrictions in diet on the patient, and occasionally on some of the latter's near relations likewise. Food which the patient is allowed to eat is known as *byãinka* (M.) and *kuñ* (S.). Sometimes the sukya ties a knotted cord round the legs, arms, breast, or neck of the patient, and the latter must abstain from the use of certain food, from salt and chili pepper, and observe continence for as many days as there are knots in the cord.

The cure proper consists in whistling over the sick person, blowing tobacco smoke over him, and massaging and sucking the afflicted body parts. The sukya purifies the drinking water, or any other beverage intended for the patient, by exposing it to the dew for some time, and then blowing into it with a bamboo rod or a tobacco pipe so as to produce bubbles. Painted sticks of hardwood are stuck in the ground around the bed of the sick person in order to keep evil spirits away. The sukya walks or dances around the sick bed, singing or muttering mysterious and incomprehensible words which are supposed to belong to the "spirit language." If a remedy does not seem to do any good, the sukya tries another one, just as does his learned confrère in more civilized countries.

Nobody must pass to windward of the house where the patient is undergoing a treatment, as one would kill the latter by "robbing him of air and breath." Should these orders be trespassed the sukya will exact a fine from the guilty ones. A woman *enceinte* or with an infant must also keep out of sight as she might cause the death of both patient and sukya; these same restrictions apply also to any person of either sex having assisted shortly before at a burial.

Should the sick person not become any better, or even die eventually, the sukya will claim that his instructions had not been carried out carefully. Generally he ascribes such a calamity to disobedience in food restrictions. The actual or presumed breach of the abovenamed injunctions affords a convenient loophole for lack of success in the treatment.

152 Surgical operations are sometimes practiced by the sukya with the aid of splinters from broken glass bottles or bones, and chips of flint or obsidian. As antiseptics he uses ashes, tobacco, beeswax, and gums from certain trees.

If the illness is not of a serious nature the sukya may cure it without seeing the patient. In such cases the remedies are administered by a third person, after having been "treated" (M.: *yabakan*) by the doctor by the usual methods of incantation.

The above-mentioned modes of cure are practiced by both Miskito and Sumu. The Sumu sukya also anoints the afflicted part of the sick in the form of a cross with a few drops of blood obtained by making a small incision under the tongue of a healthy virgin or boy with the aid of a prickle or thorn.[66]

Many sorcerers apparently believe in the efficacy of these methods, and they will practice these incantations over their own relations; when sick themselves, they will submit to such a treatment by one of their confrères. An old Miskito sukya from Rio Patuca, however, admitted to the writer that he practices all this hocus-pocus solely in order to keep the people in fear and thus be able to collect the fee.

TREATMENT OF EPIDEMICS.—In case of a very complicated and lingering disease or an epidemic the patients are isolated in provisional ranches built a short distance away from the village, in order to prevent the sickness from spreading. Green bushes or weeds are burned, and the heavy wreaths of smoke given off are supposed to act as a disinfectant. A bird or horselike figure (M. and S.: *dikutna*) is made by the sukya with sticks, leaves, clay, or wax, and he manages to lock the disease up therein after prolonged incantations. Once inside, the evil becomes incandescent and it is taken far away from the village, so that it can no longer harm the inhabitants. But should the sickness be very obstinate, the sukya orders the removal to another locality, and the infected village is burned to the ground.

CONVALESCENCE.—When the sukya has expelled the evil spirit and the patient is on the road to recovery the sukya organizes a feast to which all the inhabitants of the settlement are invited. Food and drink are offered to them. The custom is limited to the Miskito, who call this feast *pai*, a word which the Sumu apply to the sweet potato (M.: *tawa*).[67] It takes place on the eve of the day on which the patient is to leave the house of the sukya and return home again. The latter organizes everything, but all expenses are borne by the patient, who, however, has still to observe a strict diet and is not allowed to partake of any food or drink served to the guests. The feast lasts until daybreak, and no one is allowed to leave before that time, otherwise the disease with which the convalescent person was afflicted will be transferred to him. For some time after his recovery the patient's food is first brought to the sukya, who purifies it by

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[66] Oviedo stated that the inhabitants of Chontales (Nicaragua) made blood offerings by piercing their tongues.

[67] It is of interest to note that according to the traditions of the Carib the spirits of the bush have a marked aversion to sweet potatoes (*Ipomoea batatas* Poir).

155 whistling and blowing over it for about 5 or 10 minutes. Should he suffer a relapse and undergo another treatment the sukya will demand another fee.

RELIGION: SUPREME BEING, TRIBAL HEROES, SPIRITS, CREATION OF MAN, DELUGE, CHRISTIANIZATION

776 Supreme being.—The religious system of these tribes has been fast disintegrating for the last generation. Nowadays both tribes believe in the existence of a Supreme Deity, which the Miskito call *Wan-Aisa*, "Our Father," and the Sumu *Ma-Papak* or *Ma-Papañki*, "Our Father" or "Sun-Father." Both tribes also make use of the name *Dawan*, "Master" or "Lord." This conception has probably been borrowed from Christianity; still Exquemelin (Engl. ed.: 251) states that in his days (1671) the Miskito believed in one God. This Deity, which dwells in heaven, is sometimes confused with the various tribal heroes. According to these Indians, God has created the world and the inhabitants, but He does not appear to worry a great deal about the individual being, nor is He able to ward off the various dangers which continually menace mankind; consequently He is not honored with offerings, prayers, worship, or sacrifice. Furthermore, He lives so far away from earth that it is impossible to enter into relations with Him, and He can not be approached by man.

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821 Minor gods and tribal heroes.—Both the Miskito and the Sumu believe in the existence of a number of supernatural beings, living formerly on earth like man. These are the sun (M.: *yu, lapta;* S.: *ma*), thunder (M.: *alwani;* S.: *alwana*), moon (M.: *kati;* S.: *wáiko*), rainbow (M.: *kumadora;* S.: *wayauli, wayuli*), stars and planets (M.: *slilma;* T., P.: *yala;* U.: *ma-baka* "small sun"), the Pleiades (M.: *pupu-wihta;* S.: *kalpas*). According to a Sumu myth a bright planet, called by the Miskito *kati-maya*, "the moon's wife," which is seen just above the new moon, was originally a girl, who was raised by her finger tips by *Udo*, the moon god (Heath, c: 77). These various [171] heavenly bodies are supposed by the Sumu to travel in canoes, a belief which is also held by the Cuna of Panama.[68]

Some of these supernatural beings are in charge of the elements and are responsible for the great calamities which appear occasionally. The god of the wind and of the air, called by the Miskito *Prahaku* or *Aubiya*,[69] sends the hurricanes and the great inundations which destroy the plantations and kill the livestock. His representative is the rainbow, which the Panamaka Sumu sometimes call *walasa aniwe*, "the devil is vexed." At its appearance the Indians hide their children in the huts so that they may not see it nor point at it; by the latter act the outstretched arm or hand is supposed to become crippled and covered with terrible sores. 776 821

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[68] Erland Nordenskiöld, Les Rapports entre l'Art, la Religion, et la Magie chez les Cuna et les Choco. Journal de la Société des Americanistes de Paris, tome XII, Paris, 1929, p. 150.

[69] Cf. "obi" or "obeah," a species of sorcery practiced among West Indian Negroes.

Thunder (M.: *alwani;* S.: *alwana*) is sometimes confounded with God among the heathen Miskito and Sumu. According to some, he created the world and governs it by appointing the seasons; others say that he lived formerly on earth and was the first man. When he thunders, it is to warn man that a flood is coming. From an Ulwa Indian, originally from the headwaters of Rio Grande, I obtained the following story, which I propose naming— 773

THE ORIGIN OF THE KIAWA ROCKS

God (*Ma-Papañki*) sent Thunder (*Alwana*) as his representative to the earth to instruct the people in agriculture and in other arts and crafts. One day while Alwana was absent from home an evil spirit, named Kiawa, came and carried off his wife.

A parrot (*warãũwa*) informed Thunder of this fact while the latter was planting pine trees on a big rock at a place called to this day *Alwana kuma-ka rumpañ* (in Miskito, *Alwani ãi-sal-ka lulkan*). This locality is on Rio Quiguasca, the upper course of Rio Grande; pine-covered rocks and low hills extend there to the very edge of the river.

Upon hearing what had happened, Thunder left his work in order to wrest his wife from Kiawa. He found the latter at his home on Rio Iya, a tributary of Rio Tuma. Kiawa was drunk at the time, but he was a powerful giant, and Thunder was unable to master him at first.

When the fight began Kiawa turned into a boa constrictor (*wyail*) and swallowed his own wife, in order to prevent her from falling into the hands of Thunder. The two enemies then vied with each other in growing tall, in order to reach the clouds. Each in turn outgrew the other, until finally Thunder's head overtopped the clouds, which enabled him to press his enemy to the ground. With his long machete (*maset*) he then cut Kiawa in pieces, thereby restoring to life all the people who had been swallowed by the giant. The various parts of the latter turned into rocks which are visible on the upper Rio Iya, and are still known by the name Kiawa. The Indians claim that sometimes these rocks bleed, and that certain parts of the giant, as his head and navel, may still be distinctly seen.[70]

SPIRITS.—More powerful than God or the various tribal heroes are the numerous evil spirits (M.: *wlasa, lasa;*[71] T., P.: *walasa;* U.: 776

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[70] Heath (b: 419) gives a slightly different version of this story.

[71] Dampier (I, 9) already states that the devil is called *Wolleasy* by the Miskito.

776 *nawal*[77]), which inhabit the hills, caves, deep water pools, etc. They are extremely malevolent and they are ever ready to injure the people, causing disease or death. They are especially dangerous after sundown, when the fear of them makes a coward of the most daring and courageous Indians.

775 The Indian has a natural reluctance to reveal his religious ideas, especially such as he suspects to seem ridiculous to a stranger. It is therefore very difficult to obtain reliable information from them pertaining to this subject. At the death of a person the material body undergoes dissolution and one or more spirits are set free and roam about doing mischief, until they are directed by the sukya to the Hereafter. Animals likewise have spirits, or they may be possessed by evil spirits.

776 823 Conspicuous hills are generally haunted by evil spirits, and the latter are said to have carved the petroglyphs found at certain large river falls. Peculiarly shaped rocks are supposed to have been formerly human beings, who have become petrified, generally as a punishment.[78] Not only may sentient beings be changed into rocks, but they may also originally have issued from them. A Sumu legend traces the origin of that tribe to the Kaunapa Hill on the left bank of Rio Patuca, to a place where petrified navels are said to exist.

774 789 Trees and plants appear to be animated by spirits (M.: *lilka;* T., P.: *wayani;* U.: *wayaka*), which affect their growth and the ripening of their fruits. In order to increase the yield of a fruit tree, or to render barren trees productive, several objects are placed on their branches after having been blown upon (M.: *yabakan*) by the sukya. Vegetal attraction charms, which are carried for good luck in the various walks of life, would seem to point toward an original belief in plants possessing associated spirits.

776 Indians will keep at a certain distance from spirits and do not look at them nor point to them, nor even talk of them, as they might materialize, for, "speak of the devil and he is sure to appear." They even refuse to look at certain places haunted by evil spirits, and if they have to pass at close distance they will turn away the face in an opposite direction.

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[77] This word has evidently a close philological connection with *Naualli*, the name of a magical high priest of the Aztecs; he was celibate and was supposed to assume animal shape at will. From his name is derived the term "nagualism," a species of sorcery still existing among the ignorant Ladinos in certain regions of Central America. *Nawa* or *nawah* is also the Sumu name for "puma" or "jaguar." Cf. also *naual* "sorcerer" and *naual-ih* "to predict, to enchant," in the Quiché language of Guatemala.

[78] On the right bank of Rio Coco, opposite Yaluk Hill, there are some rocks which are believed to be the petrified remains of a great Sumu sukya, named Panamaka, who lived on the said hill.

The spirits may come to the neighborhood of human habitations in 776 their anthropomorphic form and try to seduce Indians of the opposite sex, and abnormal children will be the result of this intimacy. Monstrosities among the animal and vegetable world are also held to be spirits. Just like snakes, these spirits are said to have a great passion for women at the menstrual periods.

CONNECTION OF SPIRITS WITH THE SILK-COTTON TREE.—The silk- 778 cotton tree (M.: *sisin;* T., P.: *panya;* U.: *paniki*) is said to be the abode of the spirits of the departed, and no one ventures under it during the night. It must not be cut down, as by such an act the spirits would be robbed of their favorite resting place, and they would not fail to revenge themselves. Should it be absolutely necessary, however, to cut down a silk-cotton tree, the wrath of the spirits may be avoided by burying something at the foot of the tree in the shape of an offering, as food, red peppers, money, etc. When the tree has been felled, the object in question may be recovered. On Rio Lacus, a southern affluent of Rio Coco, a Sumu used for this purpose two small dolls or puppets (M.: *yapti;* S.: *ditalna*), which he had obtained from the sukya. This procedure, which savors of African origin, is the only case of this sort which I have met among the Sumu, but the habit in question is common enough among the Miskito.

The Indians also claim that a dugout made from the silk-cotton tree will groan continually during the night, and that at the same time it will travel with tremendous speed. A similar plaintive sound is said to be emitted during the dark by mattresses or pillows stuffed with the down adhering to the seeds of the tree. For the above-named reasons the credulous Indians make no use whatever of the haunted tree.

The Creoles and the West Indian Negroes dread this tree even 778 more than do the Indians; according to them the spirit of the de- 775 ceased, which they call "shadow" or "duppy," leaves the grave on the third day after death in order to roam about the woods, especially around the ceiba or silk-cotton trees. Some believe that these super- [171] stitions concerning the tree may have been taken from the Africans; still, the Maya of Yucatan and the Quiché of Guatemala, who have had practically no intercourse with Negroes, hold beliefs regarding the silk-cotton tree similar to those of the Miskito and Sumu.

CREATION OF MAN.—As stated above, the Miskito confound 776 Thunder (*Alwani*) and God (*Wan-Aisa, Dawan*) sometimes with one another, and both of these supernatural beings are looked upon as the creator of man and the world in general. The Sumu, however, consider the Sun-god (*Uhubaput*) as the Almighty God and Creator of everything, and in former days are supposed to have worshiped him.

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According to a tradition recorded by Grossmann (b, 4) the world was created by two brothers, of whom the elder was named *Papañ*.[74] After the hills, lagoons, forests, rivers, and savannas had been brought into existence the two brothers were paddling about the river in a small canoe. In shooting a rapid the canoe capsized and the two creators were thrown into the water and compelled to make for the shore. Feeling cold, they built a fire; and feeling also the pangs of hunger they went into the forest, where they found some maize, which they plucked and roasted. As they made their meal they threw some of the cobs on the ground, where they instantly were transformed into animals; others thrown into the water became fishes, while the remainder stayed in the air as birds. Dumfounded at this sudden manifestation of life around them and the strange shapes which it assumed, they forgot their situation, until *Papañ* was brought to a realization of it by coming in contact with the fire, by which he was caught. As he started to burn, he ascended from the earth, rising higher and higher, until his brother could only see him as a large, round, burning spot high up in the sky. He thus became the sun (*ma*). While the younger brother was gazing upward and awaiting the return of *Papañ*, he was also lighted up by the treacherous fire and started to rise, but, being unwilling to share the fate of his brother, struggled to maintain his gravity, and thus raised a vast quantity of sparks; but after all he had to give in and go up, accompanied by the sparks, which spread themselves over the firmament, he remaining in the midst of them. Thus were formed the moon (*wâiko*) and the stars (*yala*). The Sumu consider themselves the children of *Papañ*, having been formed from his rays.

DELUGE.—The Miskito and Sumu, like many Indian tribes of America, have traditions of a great catastrophe in which a whole country was submerged, only a few people being able to escape to the mountain tops. The following legend, referring to such a deluge, was told to the writer in 1921 by a Panamaka Sumu from the village of Tasbapauni (Rio Prinsapolca):

Two brothers Suko (="bamboo") and Kuru (="cacao pataste," *Theobroma bicolor*) went out fishing to the Cualigua (Kwaliwa) Creek, a tributary of Rio Oconguas (Prinsapolca system). They caught many excellent food fishes of a species known by the Indian names *srik* or *sirik*. Then they had a gigantic river catfish (M.: *batsi;* S. *susum*) at the hook. Suko immediately wanted to eat a piece of the latter, but Kuru objected, as it appeared to him to be a sort of spirit. Suko, however, did not listen to his brother, and he roasted a piece of the fish and ate it. But hardly had he finished his meal when he became very thirsty. Having eaten too much, he

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[74] *Papañ* is the Sumu name for "father."

could scarcely move, and he asked his brother for some water. The 113
latter did as he was told, but the more Suko drank the thirstier he became, and he kept his brother continually on the run to fetch water. Finally Kuru became tired of this and helped his brother to get to the edge of the creek, so that he might drink as much as he wanted.

Arrived at the waterside, Suko lay down on the ground, and reaching with his head down in the water, he kept on drinking without stopping. Gradually his body assumed the shape of a gigantic boa constrictor (M.: *waula;* S. *wayil*), while the head retained its normal size and shape. Kuru became scared and he went home, but did not dare tell anything about what had happened. When the people inquired about his brother, he answered that he was still engaged in fishing and would come a little later.

But the neighbors noticed that something had happened and they made off all together to look for Suko. Arrived at the fishing ground, they found the boa constrictor on the branches of a very high ceiba or silk-cotton tree. But hardly had they perceived him when a big flood came which inundated the whole country. Every one was drowned with the exception of Suko and the latter's wife and children.

CHRISTIANIZATION.—Many women and children who have not 177
been christened carry small crosses, medallions, and scapularies around their neck, which articles they have obtained from passing priests, or bought from Ladino traders. They consider them generally as charms to ward off danger, sickness, poison, and death. By many Indians who have not received any teachings from missionaries baptism is considered often only a sort of magic ceremony to get a new name, drive out the devil, or ward off danger, evil, and the like. Even in the interior, where many Indians pretend to be Catholics, the cult of the saints is often nothing less than a fetish worship. Pictures and statues of the saints take the place of house idols. When the Indians are on the point of committing an act which does not agree with the teachings of the church, the respective images or statuettes are covered up with a cloth, so that the saints are unable to observe them. When they ask the saint for a special favor they make a vow or solemn promise to him and pray during nine consecutive evenings. In case the saint proves unreliable he is sometimes punished by being beaten or beheaded or mutilated in some other way.

During the colonial period Spanish missionaries made several 797
attempts to penetrate among the aborigines of the Mosquito Coast, but their efforts were unsuccessful. An account of the activities of these Franciscan monks is given by Conzemius (b: 25–31). Since the last years of the nineteenth century Spanish Capuchins from Barcelona have been established at Bluefields and in several of the

797 larger settlements of the country; they ignore the Indian languages, however, and their activities are practically limited to the Ladinos.

On the other hand, the Moravians (*Unitas Fratrum*), who came to the coast in 1849, have succeeded in evangelizing most of the Miskito and some of the Sumu as well. They use both English and Miskito in church and school. The first effort by Protestants to introduce Christianity among these Indians is the one made by English Puritans, who in 1630, under the Earl of Warwick, took possession of the island of Providencia, situated off the Atlantic shore of Nicaragua. They opened up commercial relations with the Miskito of Cabo Gracias a Dios and maintained themselves in the island until 1641, when they were ejected by a Spanish fleet. In those days a number of the Indians traveled to Providencia, where they became familiar with the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments (Sloane, a: I, p. LXXVIII).

SUPERSTITIOUS BELIEFS: OMENS, CHARMS, AMULETS, TALISMANS, ETC.

787 **Bad omens.**—Anything occurring out of the ordinary is considered a bad omen (M.: *yiilswin;* S.: *diluk*), and some calamity is believed to befall one or more of the persons present.

Should the hunter, for instance, miss the game an unusual number of times on a certain day, he considers this the sign or token that he will soon fall sick and perhaps even die.

If someone should quite involuntarily let the paddle drop in the water, this is accepted in the light of a token of something evil about to happen.

Should the dog act in a peculiar manner and run around barking all about the house, although investigations will show that there is nothing wrong anywhere, this is a bad omen and soon some one of the inmates will die.

The crowing of a hen is also taken for a bad augury. Ladinos and Creoles participate in this superstition, and they immediately catch the fowl in question and wring its neck.

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787 **Birds of ill omen.**—There are a number of birds which cause disease and even death when being seen, either at any time or under certain circumstances only. They should particularly be avoided by the Indian when he is hunting or working in the bush on a Sunday, but this belief is undoubtedly traceable to Christian influence. The Indians refuse to eat the flesh or the eggs of certain melancholy birds, believing that by so doing they will go wailing through the bush like the lonely bird itself. They also refrain from killing certain birds believed to have a keeper or owner invisible to man, and who would revenge himself.

Certain owls and the snake hawk (M.: *waka, wakema;* S.: *makawa*) are especially feared, and the mere sight of them is supposed to cause disease or death. 825 781

The goat sucker (*Caprimulgus* sp.), a very common bird, is also feared owing to its uncanny nocturnal habits, the swiftness and peculiarity of its flight, and its note, which breaks the silence of the night. In Costa Rica its bones, dried and ground to a fine powder, are used by the Indians as a charm against their enemies. The powdered bone is mixed with tobacco in a cigarette which when smoked causes certain death, according to the popular belief.

A large spotted nightbird (M.: *boa, ukwan;* S.: *ya*), which appears sometimes in the neighborhood of the settlements at daybreak, is likewise feared.

The note of a nightbird, resembling the Mexican cuckoo and known by the onomatopoeic names of *pikwa* (M.) and *tika* (S.), is supposed to give a flat denial to any assertion made at that moment. When heard immediately after some one has made a remark, it means that the person in question has told a lie, or that he is unable to perform what he intended to do. If the Indians are, for instance, discussing some project, as a journey, festival, hunting expedition, and the like, the cry of this bird will cause them to put it off. When the hunter hears its voice he returns home immediately, knowing that luck will be against him on that day. At the mahogany camp on Rio Camanan (Rio Coco) a young Sumu from Rio Patuca was discussing with some of his countrymen the route to be followed on his journey back home, his period of contract having expired, when suddenly a loud *pikwa* was heard near by. The Indian immediately became alarmed and despondent, and it took some time to calm his fears.

SUPERSTITIONS REGARDING OTHER ANIMALS.—A small ugly species of croaking lizard, called "galley asp" by the Creoles (M.: *akak;* S.: *kakak*), is held to be very venomous. The Indians claim that after having bitten some one it will rush immediately to the nearest water; the person bitten must do the same, and whichever reaches the waterside first will survive (Bell, a: 265). 825

The zumbadora snake (M.: *matsiksa*) is said to be very savage at certain times of the year, when its bite may become fatal. Others claim that, if molested, it will pursue a person, twist round his body, and lash him with its tail; it especially attacks a woman *enciente*.

The boa snake is said to contain a little venom in its fangs, which it discharges in the early morning only; at that time of the day its bite is therefore considered fatal.

A small speckled tortoise (M.: *swanhriñ;* S.: *palan-kuwa*) is said to be very thoughtless, and to lose its way frequently, as it may be found occasionally on the hills, far away from the nearest stream.

825 The Indians do not eat it, believing that by so doing they will become forgetful like the tortoise itself, and become lost in the bush or misplace things, and the like.

825 781 Strange animals are regarded as evil spirits and their appearance is a bad omen; the Indians do not dare to kill them. Heath, while stopping with his Miskito crew from Kiplapihni at an empty house at Burimak (middle Rio Coco), came across a strange bat, which event he relates as follows: "We saw clinging under the palm roof a small snow-white bat. Some felt sure that it would suck our blood in the night; so it was killed, but turned out to be a perfectly harmless creature with very beautiful fur. But now, as no one present had seen such a white bat before, some declared that its coming was a bad omen; others that it was sent by an evil spirit, or was even more likely itself to be an evil spirit; that the man who killed it would soon die of a pernicious fever, etc. It took some time to calm the fears of the women especially." (Heath, b: 377.)

789 751 CHARMS, AMULETS, TALISMANS.—Some of the ornaments are undoubtedly supposed to act as charms, amulets, or talismans, as they are worn chiefly by the women and children, who are especially exposed to the malicious influence of evil spirits. In fact the different works of art and modes of decoration, including ornaments, paint, mutilation, scarification, tattoo, etc., seem to have had originally a religious and magical significance rather than a desire to embellish the appearance. Red and black paint is still regarded a prophylactic against disease.

789 Charms are used for managing the opposite sex, as a cure for barrenness by women, in order to have a male child, and for luck in hunting and fishing. Jaguar teeth are carried as talismans for courage, strength, and to stimulate virility and excite venery.

Charms on fruit trees have the object of increasing their yield and keeping birds, animals, and even man from plundering them. In order to render fruit trees more productive the Miskito drive a nail in the side of the stem facing the west. When they make staffs for turtle spears they also prefer utilizing the west side of the stem of the pejivalle palm, believing that part of the trunk to be more durable and resistant.[73]

Celts or stone axes, which are occasionally dug up in the fields, are regarded as "thunderbolts," and were worn in former days as amulets for protection against lightning. They were also supposed to render the bearer brave and enduring. They are considered very efficacious in healing certain diseases, and the sukya makes use of them in practicing his rites of sorcery. On account of these properties the Indians will part with stone axes only for a comparatively large sum of money. 789

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[73] The Creoles, in making tea from the medicinal bark of certain trees, likewise prefer using the bark on the side facing the sunset.

Similar superstitions about these stone celts are held by the other 789 populations of this part of Central America. The local names "thunderbolt," "thunderstone" (Creoles), "piedra de raya" (Spanish), 171 *alwani mahbra*, *imyula mahbra* (M.), *alwana suma* (S.), *dama up* (Rama) in themselves point to a belief in their celestial origin. They are supposed to come down from the sky with the lightning and they are held responsible for the damage done at such an occasion. They penetrate the soil to a depth of 7 feet and then slowly work their way upward, reaching the surface again in seven years. It is claimed that sometimes such a thunderbolt may be found in a tree which has been struck by lightning. The surface of these celts is always smooth; often they are highly polished. Their color is always supposed to be identical with that of the soil in which they have been discovered.[76]

DIVINING ROD.—The Sumu of Rio Prinsapolca are said to make 787 use of some sort of a divining rod (M.: *smaya kāikaya;*[77] T., P.: *tiñ amañnin;* U.: *ya bohnaka*), consisting of a smooth rod of either cacao wood or wild cane; it is about 3 feet in length, and a cotton thread is tied around the center. The Sumu appear to use the *tapúa* for the same purpose as the Jicaque of Honduras; with its aid they claim to be able to obtain almost any information regarding the future, their luck in fishing, hunting, love-making, etc.

I have not been able to see any of these rods, nor did I obtain any definite details regarding the manner in which they are used. The following account is taken from Collinson (b: 152): "Another very common and favorite method of unraveling the unknown is an incantation by a sukya. He commences operations by cutting a small wand, peeling it, and tying a short string to its top. He then strokes it repeatedly, muttering in undertone words supposed to form an incantation; after this has been done for some time, one end of the stick is placed in the left elbow, and the right arm is stretched out to the string end. If it exactly reaches this when extended to its full

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[76] Some of the Creoles and Ladinos place stone axes in their water tanks and earthen water jars, in order to keep the drinking water pure and clean and at the same time preserve themselves from certain maladies. These celts are also believed to protect the houses from lightning, and for that purpose are suspended from the roof. A "true thunderbolt," it is claimed, may be determined by tying a thread firmly around the middle of the celt, and then attempting to burn the thread. This may be done by holding a match to it, or suspending it over a lighted candle, or even throwing it in the fire. If the celt is genuine the thread will not burn. Of course such an experiment can be made successfully with any smooth stone to which a thread has been tied so firmly that there is no air intervening, thus retarding combustion of the thread until the stone itself is hot enough to burn it.

[77] Lit.: "to have a hunch."

787 length the wand will reveal the truth; if not the string must be altered and the process repeated until it is in its right position. Questions relating to the present and future will then be answered by the sukya, correctly as he states, though I must confess that the queries I propounded were never replied to very successfully, but I was an unbeliever, and it is a notorious fact that spirits are put out of their calculations by the incredulous."

789 CONTROL OF RAIN AND WI[illegible]ain and wind can, according to the Indians, be produced or s[illegible] at will by human, animal, or spirit agency. Thus while paddling down Rio Plátano with a Miskito crew, I noticed clouds gathering windward and threatening rain. The captain of the boat, upon noticing them, motioned the rain with the right hand to pass on, with the following words: "Do not come here as we do not want to get wet now! We have no shirt nor trousers with us to change, and if you will wet us we will have to remain in the moist clothes the whole day long and suffer from the cold. Pass on to those indolent and good-for-nothing people on Rio Patuca; they are all at home now lying in their hammocks."

Bell (b: 157) relates a similar experience with the Miskito of Rio Prinsapolca: The Indians, hearing the rain coming by the noise in the distant bush, vainly tried to keep it off by blowing with their mouths and driving the breath away on either side of their faces. They also spoke to the rain, telling it of the uselessness of its coming to wet them, thus: "Pass on, pass on; we are all wet already. You need not come here; pass on to the head of the river. There is gunpowder and tinder lying uncovered on the rocks. A man is burning a plantation there; pass on quickly, lest another shower wet it before you."

Often when the Indians heard a shower coming they pushed their canoe quietly under the thick bush to hide until the rain had passed, and were much annoyed if any one talked or made any noise. The [825] killing of a howling monkey was also believed to bring rain, as that animal belongs to the water spirit, who will be angry at such an act (Bell, b: 157).

While proceeding up Rio Coco from the port Cabo Gracias a Dios to the Miskito settlement of the same name, my two paddlers put up a small sail, and then kept on whistling in order to call the wind to help them in their work. When all their efforts were of no avail they became rather vexed and made some disobliging remarks about the "lazy wind" (*pasa sriñwankira*).

821 ECLIPSES.—An eclipse of the moon is said by the Sumu to be caused by the jaguar devouring that heavenly body; their name in itself points to this belief (*wäiko nawa kaswe, wäiko nawa kasya;* lit.: "the jaguar is eating the moon"). At a lunar eclipse, no matter at what time of the night it occurs, the Sumu get up immediately in order

to frighten that feline and drive it away, by shooting arrows at it, 821
making great fires, and beating drums. The same belief is held by these Indians with regard to a solar eclipse (T., P.: *ma nawa kaswe;* U.: *ma nawa kasya* "the jaguar is eating the sun").[78]

The Miskito, however, do not share in this superstition; they call the lunar eclipse *kati di-skura alkan* "the moon has caught his mother-in-law," and the solar eclipse *yu di-skura alkan* "the sun has caught his mother-in-law."[79]

Snake charming.—Snake charming is practiced on the Mosquito 789
Coast by Negroes chiefly (native Africans especially), but some of the Miskito are also supposed to know this art. In order to remain [751]
invulnerable against the bite of any snake, these people are said to drink from time to time an infusion made by boiling the guaco weed (*Mikania* sp.) in water. The same effect may be obtained by applying a little juice from the latter plant into a small incision in the skin. The chewing of a few guaco leaves every day is also supposed to be an efficacious preventive against snake bites. The best snake charmers are said to eat the head of the reptile after having extracted the poisonous fangs; others merely cook their food with a little fat extracted over a slow fire from the head of a snake. The snake charmer must submit to restrictions in diet during certain periods of the year; he must also abstain from sexual intercourse with other women but his own, lest he might lose his powers.

In order to capture a poisonous snake without any danger to himself, the snake charmer chews a little bark from a certain shrub [824]
(M.: *pyuta saika*) and then spits upon the head of the reptile. The latter is immediately stupefied and becomes absolutely harmless.

Many people are supposed to keep tame snakes in their houses or 231
fields in order to guard their property. These reptiles act as watchdogs and will bite any intruder. The more ignorant Ladinos, who call such a snake "sontín" (from the English word "something," it appears), believe that this habit is practiced by almost all the Indians and Negroes of the Mosquito Coast.

Camotillo poison.—This is supposed to be a deadly poison with 278
the aid of which the intended victim will die at a specified date, if everything has been prepared the right way. Even if the victim should know that camotillo has been administered to him he can not escape from a lingering death, for science knows of no way to counteract its effects.

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[78] The Cuna Indians of Panama believe that eclipses of the sun or of the moon are caused by a demon—half dog, half woman—which starts eating those heavenly bodies; these Indians drive the demon away by shooting at it with miniature arrows (E. Nordenskiöld, Comparative Ethnographical Studies, vol. 7, pt. 2, Göteborg, 1930, p. 20).

[79] Sun and moon are considered masculine in the Miskito language.

278 Camotillo is the Spanish name for a tuberous plant, said to be not unlike the sweetpotato vine. It is supposed to grow in a wild state in certain regions of the Mosquito Coast, in the neighborhood of the rivers, but it is known only to few persons. The tuber is dried in the sun and reduced to a fine powder by a very laborious process. After pulverization it is introduced into the food or drink of the intended victim. Death will set in after exactly as many days as the tuber in question had been extracted from the soil at the time of administration.

The Ladinos believe that many Miskito and Sumu are acquainted with this manner of disposing of an enemy, but I was unable to obtain from these Indians any reliable details pertaining to the plant. All my Indian informants denied knowing it. In 1919 the candidates for president and vice president of Honduras died several months previous to the election, and the ignorant people of that Republic ascribed their deaths to the administration of camotillo by adherents of the rival political party.

753 754 **Witch poison.**—Many Indians believe that poison can be wafted through the air to the intended victim. The fear of "buried poison" has been introduced among the Miskito by Negroes from British Honduras and Jamaica, who have settled at the coast. In fact the Miskito of Rio Coco and Honduras nowadays ascribe disease not so much to the mischief of evil spirits as to the presence of buried poison in the neighborhood of the sick person's house. This poison is supposed to have been hidden there by one of his enemies with the object of causing him to fall into some lingering disease, as dysentery, and eventually to die. Such poison, which is generally inclosed in a bottle, is said to soak through the cork, spread to the surface, and then cause disease to all the people in the neighborhood.

755 When after the administration of different remedies there is no improvement in the condition of a sick person, a "poison doctor," that is, a sukya skilled in the discovery of such witch poison, is called. The latter, upon his arrival, takes a little walk around the house, and then pretends to smell buried poison in the neighborhood. He promises to take it out if everyone in the settlement will give him a small amount of money. As the presumed bad effects of such buried poison will gradually spread to the whole village, everyone will pay his share, and the following day the sorcerer promises to do the needful. In the meantime, generally during the night, he buries a small flask of a dark liquid near the house of the sick person. In the morning the entire population of the village is present in order to witness the extraction of the source of the illness. After searching the vicinity of the house for a considerable time the sukya finally walks to the spot where he buried the small bottle during the night, and then triumphantly shouts: *Nara sa* "Here it is." He shows the

liquid to the people present, but none of them dares to inspect it, not being immune from its effects as are the poison doctors and the foreigners. During the last two decades the fear of buried poison has spread to the Tawira-Miskito and to the Sumu; these Indians believe that the Miskito from Rio Coco are especially dangerous on account of their habit of killing their enemies with the aid of buried poison. Certain charms, as, for instance, the bitter antidote bean (*Fevillea cordifolia*), are occasionally carried to ward off the effects of such witch poison. 755

DREAMS.—The Indian pays great attention to dreams (M.: *yapri sáuhkan;* T., P.: *amana;* U.: *amiña*). When he dreams that he has killed plenty of game he is certain to have good luck in the chase on the following morning. If he dreams of an accident he refuses to leave the settlement during the next few days. When he dreams of strangers, he expects a visit in the near future. The sukya, while curing a sick person, invokes friendly spirits in order to obtain from them during the dream information regarding the nature of the illness. 787

HAUNTED TREES.—The silk-cotton tree (see Religion, etc.) and the various species of figs (*Ficus* sp.), especially the giant chilamate or higuero, are said to be haunted. The Indians and Creoles believe that these fig trees flower only during the night and hold the fig to be the true fruit. Any one daring to go under the tree about midnight will be able to see the blossom and after that will be favored with good luck in anything he may attempt. This belief is shared by the ignorant Ladinos, who claim that the fig trees flower only on Good Friday night and that a blanket spread under them at midnight will be covered with small blossoms on the following morning. 824 [777]

MAGIC AND SORCERY: SUKYA, OKULI, SPIRITIST, OBEAH OR VOODOOISM

SHAMANS IN GENERAL.—Among these credulous people a great influence is exercised by the shamans, of which there were formerly only two categories, the *sukya* and the *okuli*. Of the latter there should be only one at a time, but of the former there is one in almost every larger village. In recent years two other sorts of shamans, the *spiritist* and the *obeah man*, have appeared on the coast. 756

These shamans play a great rôle in the life of the Indians, for they act as medicine men, doctors (see Hygiene: Diseases and their cure), augurs, conjurers, magicians, wizards, diviners, rain makers, spellbinders, priests, preachers, teachers, guides, advisors, counsellors, depositaries of tribal traditions, and the like. Their opinions were formerly of the greatest weight in tribal assemblies. Still, there is nothing characteristic about them in the way of ornament or dress, 756 and they are not to be distinguished in their outward appearance from the ordinary mortals.

According to Miskito traditions their art was introduced by a white man from the east, known as *Almuk-awra* (lit.: "old drift man"), who was apparently some sort of culture hero. This reminds of the Mexican myth dealing with *Quetzalcoatl*, who also came from the east and was likewise a shaman. The first Sumu shaman is said to have been a man named *Ado* or *Mamañ* [80] (Grossmann, b: 4).

THE SUKYA.—This is the name of the lowest of the two kinds of
756 sorcerers found originally among the Miskito and Sumu. The name
171 is also current among the neighboring tribes, as the Paya and the
Rama, although the indigenous designations for the priest-doctor in
196 these two languages are respectively *wata* and *turmala*. The term
sukya (sukia, suquia) [81] is also employed by the Mova and the San Blas Indians of Panama, and likewise occasionally by the Talamanca of Costa Rica. In the dialects of the Talamanca region, however, the native name is *tsukur* (or *tsugur*, *tsugru*, *tsugrūh*, *tsuku*). In the various Costa Rican languages the elements *tsu* or *ču* mean "to drink" or "to suck," and they occur in words which may be translated by "milk," "female breast"; this is also the case with other Central American languages, as Maya-Quiché, Paya, Mixe-Zoque, Lenca, Xinca, Sumu, and Guaymi-Dorasque. It would appear, therefore, that the word sukya is etymologically related to the above terms, and that originally it meant something like "sucker," as the native medicine man extracts the material cause of the pain or ill being by the action of sucking.[82]

756 The sukya is generally a man above the average Indian in intelligence.[83] His office is generally hereditary, but frequently he is succeeded by his nephew or his son-in-law. In practically every large village of the Miskito and Sumu habitat there is a sukya to be found; Wickham (c: 207), however, did not observe any such sorcerer among the Ulwa of Rio Escondido. The sukya communicates with the unseen powers [84] and may use his art to the welfare or destruction of

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[80] *Mamañ* is, however, the Sumu name for "mother."

[81] The first mention of this name is found by M. W. (300, 302, 304, 306, 307, 308, 309) in the form *succhea*.

[82] See Rudolf Schuller, Las Lenguas Indígenas de Centro América. San José de Costa Rica, 1928 (pp. 53–54).

[83] Occasionally the sukya is an elderly woman. A young woman is, however, not qualified for this office, as she would be exposed too much to the influence of evil spirits and other supernatural dangers, especially at the menstrual period and at childbirth.

[84] Dampier (I, 9) already states that the devil, called *Wallesaw* (=*walasa*, *wlasa*, or *lasa*) by the Miskito, appears to their priest when they desire to speak to him on urgent business. M. W. (308), who writes a little later, that is, about 1699, spells that word *wallasoa*.

ordinary mortals. Thanks to these supposed powers, he is feared and 756
respected far and wide. Such a state of affairs is occasionally very
injurious to the Indian community as a whole, but in general abuses
on the part of the sukya are not common.

Besides curing the sick, the advice of the sukya is sought in many 756
instances. He is consulted in order to find out the whereabouts of a
lost or stolen object, and he furnishes remedies to cure ill luck, to 787
influence the heart of a person of the opposite sex, to increase the
valor and courage of a man, and the like. He will inform the hunter
how to proceed in order to secure plenty of game, for he has generally
a good knowledge of the instincts and habits of animals. If he is
unsuccessful, he claims that his client has transgressed some prescription.

Some of these shamans have some knowledge of astronomy; others 756
imitate the voice of other persons or of animals and birds, and some
appear to be clever ventriloquists. They foretell the death of a sick
person, and help artificially by means of poison on the specified day,
in order to strengthen their reputation.

The sukya will also be asked to harm an enemy by casting an evil 756
spell over him. The usual method followed by the Miskito sukya is 754
to fire a gun in the direction of the person upon whom he wishes to
inflict injury. His Sumu confrère will send disease or death by mistreating
or stabbing an object, usually a doll or puppet (M.: *yapti;*
S.: *ditalna*), made of white tunu bark, and supposed to represent the
intended victim. Some of these sorcerers are also said to transform
themselves into a snake or jaguar and then harm their enemy.

There are good and bad sukyas, who are sometimes at feud with each other. In his own village the sukya is generally said to be good, but in the neighboring settlement there is a bad one, whom he has to fight and send away the evil spirit which the latter despatches in order to cause disease and death. The bad sukya will, for instance, send an animal or bird with poison to the neighboring village, but his confrère from the latter settlement sees it coming and sends it back. The animal goes hither and thither, until finally the "stronger" of the two opponents wins.

Initiation of the sukya.—The choosing of his career by the sukya 756
is supposed not to be voluntary. A person whom destiny has picked
out for this high office is said to come under the influence of some 776
spirits, from whom he is unable to deliver himself. During the night
he acts like an insane person; he gets up from bed and talks with invisible
beings in a mysterious "spirit" language.

In this state he makes prophecies, and if these come true his friends will urge him to become a sukya. He then prepares himself for his career through fastings, vigils, and other means of achieving exhaustion and the novice will be reduced to a skeleton. During this

756 time he will come under the influence of some sort of tutelary spirit which henceforth will act as his protector; this may be the spirit of a 776 person, animal, plant, hill, cloud, star, etc., or some other kind of supernatural being, by whose intermediacy the would-be sukya may converse with the evil spirits. This conception of guardian spirits is found in large areas of America, and it has probably not originated from the tutelary angel of the missionaries.

756 The candidate is then ready to exercise his profession, but on the day of initiation his food must be prepared according to a manner prescribed by custom. It must be cooked by a young boy or girl, not yet arrived at the age of puberty; a slender hardwood tree, called *liwañ*, which grows very sparsely in the forest and burns readily in the green state, must be used as firewood.

The sukya is obliged from time to time to strengthen his powers by religiously abstaining from certain food and sexual intercourse, and in other ways lead a life of self-denial.

Among the Sumu any candidate for priestly and medical honors must perform the fire dance; this fiery ordeal must also be repeated occasionally in order to strengthen the connection with the unseen powers. A big pile of *liwañ* wood is made in a cleared spot in the bush and the whole is covered by a thick layer of bijagua leaves. Fire is then put to the whole, and when in full blaze, the sukya issues from the forest. He has the whole body smeared with black paint, and is entirely naked save for a loin cloth. He then walks upon the pile and remains there standing quietly until the wood is partly consumed. Then he orders the fire divided into four parts, and walks from one pile to the other with his bare feet until all the wood is burned. Strangers are never allowed to witness this performance. The Miskito greatly respect the Sumu sukya for this act which their own sorcerers are unable to perform.

756 Roberts states that the fire dance is also done by the sukya of the San Blas Indians (Panama), and that the effects of the fire are 171 resisted by some powerful antidote extracted from vegetable fibers. This ordeal is also performed by the shamans of Raiatea (Society Islands), Kandavu (Fiji Islands), and of a tribe in British India, but it has apparently not been observed in other parts of the world.

THE OKULI.—The okuli[55] is the highest shaman among the Miskito 756 and there never should be more than one at a time. The Sumu do not have any sorcerer ranking above the sukya, but many of them recognize the okuli of the Miskito.

The okuli is said to be a special representative of *Alwani*, the [776] thunder-god, or of *Aubiya* (or *Prahaku*), the lord of the air, and is supposed to control the elements. He is much more powerful than

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[55] Among the Bribri Indians of Costa Rica *oko* is the name for a sort of shaman.

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the sukya, and he does not require the four black sticks, indispensable to the latter, while curing the sick. His powers are imparted to him, while in a state of unconsciousness, after having been struck by lightning. He is then able to make prophecies and to give other proofs of his aptitude for the high office, whereupon the prominent sukyas acknowledge him as their okuli. It is not absolutely necessary for him to have been a sukya himself.

The last true okuli lived at Kum, a large Miskito village on the lower Rio Coco, where he died about 1895. He was known by the name of *Pasa-yapti* "Mother (or Goddess) of the Wind," and I was unable to learn his real name. Shortly before his death he said that Lauro, the present okuli, was to be his successor. The latter had not actually been struck by lightning, but lightning had struck into a coco palm adjoining his house in Sandy Bay, and he personally became unconscious as a result of the fright. Lauro was still a member of the Moravian Church in those days, and for that reason he refused to accept the office offered to him upon the death of *Pasa-yapti*. But finally, yielding to the pressure from the heathen Miskito, he began to assume the duties of the okuli. Lauro, however, resents the latter name, for he pretends to be a good Christian; he calls himself merely "prophet," and ascribes his supernatural powers to the grace of God.

Lauro is a very pleasant man, who was about 55 years old when the writer visited him in Sandy Bay in 1921. He has a slight admixture of Negro blood, but pretends to be a pure Miskito Indian. According to Mr. Danneberger, the Moravian missionary at Sandy Bay, he leads apparently a very clean and moral life. Although excluded from church membership, he frequents the Moravian church at Sandy Bay, and insists upon all his relations doing the same.

It is claimed by the Indians that Lauro has to quench his thirst exclusively on coconut water, and that a big flood would come and inundate the whole country should he ever take a single drop of ordinary water. Every year at the beginning of September he holds a day of prayer, when no one is allowed to travel nor to do any outside work. He then repairs to the sea at Sandy Bay, accompanied by a small child, and wades into the water up to the waist, praying and offering food to the elements, in order to keep them under his control. Every year his agents travel all over the coast to the Indian villages in order to collect money for Lauro, and many of the Christianized Indians pay the small amount asked for, so that the "prophet" should continue exerting his influence to keep hurricanes and floods away from the country. No Indian dares trespass his orders, and even some white foreigners have paid money to his agents.

When the Indians from Sandy Bay wish to undertake a voyage to the neighboring Mosquito Cays in order to catch turtle, they first consult Lauro with regard to the weather and the outlook for a good

756 catch. To most Indians the okuli is the greatest man on earth; they do not dare say anything against him, for he knows everything that goes on, no matter how far away he is.

794 786 THE SPIRITIST.—A new movement, not unlike the nyalism among Jamaican Negroes, has appeared among the Christianized Miskito during the last 40 years. While engaged in fervent prayers, either in church or at home, certain people suddenly begin to act like mad; they shiver over the whole body, run and dance around, give out loud screams, and by other means seek to attract attention.

They claim that at such periods they have no control over their actions, and that the latter are due to the presence of the Holy Ghost in themselves. For this reason they are known among the Miskito [755] as *pirit-uplika* "spirit men." While in this state of ecstasy they are supposed to be able to cure the sick by laying hands upon them. They also pretend having revelations from God during their dreams.

Although excluded from church membership by the Moravians, the spirit men or spirit women, for the female sex is not excluded from this office, frequent the churches. They pretend to be good Christians, and their influence is very great among the Christianized Miskito. The movement has, however, not had many followers among the Sumu. In certain districts the spiritists cause more trouble to the work of evangelization than to their heathen confrères, the sukyas. Although attributing the results of their cures directly and solely to the will of God, some of these spiritists make use of native herbs, of which they have a crude knowledge.

754 OBEAH OR VOODOOISM.—The belief in obeah (obia) was brought over from Africa by the slaves, and it still exists among the ignorant Creoles and the immigrated West Indian Negroes. The Blacks from British Honduras are especially noted as great obeah or voodoo men.

Feathers, bones, colored rags, thunderbolts (stone axes), and small bottles filled with insects and powdered earth, belong to the paraphernalia of these shamans, whose mode of working their spells does not differ essentially from that of the Indian sukya. Some of the obeah men from Jamaica or British Honduras have become sukya upon settling among the Indians of the Mosquito Coast.

The obeah men are much feared by the Creoles, Negroes, and Indians, as they are supposed to inflict bad luck, disease, and death upon an enemy. When some one is suffering from a lingering malady it is said that obeah is "on" him. His only recourse is to go to an obeah man, who will remove the evil for the payment of a sum of money. This sort of sorcery is, indeed, a very profitable business. Should the sick person die, however, the obeah man will claim that his instructions have not been carried out.

There are many ways practiced commonly by the obeah man to injure his own enemy or that of his client. He may send to the intended victim a "duppy" (evil spirit). Or he may work with buried "poison," that is to say, he buries in the vicinity of the house of his intended victim a package containing rags, feathers, bones, and the like, after which the latter will fall sick and eventually die. Again he may introduce poison in his food by means of a third person. The obeah man may attain the object in view, that is to set obeah on his enemy, by merely making a cross or some other mark on the house, canoe, or some tool of the latter, or by shaking hands with him. It is even claimed that some "strong" obeah men are able to direct poisonous snakes to the bed of the intended victim. Sometimes such a sorcerer brings about the desired effect, owing to the great credulity of the people, who are so afraid of him that they do not even dare to denounce him. 754

MARRIAGE AND SEXUAL LIFE

The Indian girl is sold by her parents for a gun or a head of cattle, but she is rarely forced to become the wife of a man whom she does not love. Before giving their daughter away in marriage the parents will satisfy themselves that the suitor is able to provide for his future wife and that he understands the manufacture of hunting and fishing implements. 583

COURTSHIP.—The efficacy of certain drugs or herbs in stimulating virility, exciting venery, and in conquering the heart of a person of the opposite sex is believed in by these Indians, and by many Ladinos and Creoles as well. By allowing a few drops of such a "love medicine" (M.: *yamni kúikaya sáika;* T.: *yamni talnin pananbas;* U.: *yamka talnaka dikabasta*) to fall on the clothes, handkerchief, head, or body of a person, the affection of the latter may be obtained. Other herbs used in a similar manner will produce the opposite effect; such an infusion (M.: *misbara kúikaya sáika;* T.: *ba talnin pananbas;* P.: *ma isihni talanin pananibas;* U.: *di dudka talnaka dikabasta*) is used to separate lovers who will thenceforth have a profound repugnance toward each other. Certain old people are supposed to be able to prepare very efficacious remedies of this kind, which they will sell for as much as $5. Should, however, the secret of the preparation be communicated, the charge will be about five times higher. A preparation of the Spanish fly or blister beetle, of which two varieties exist, a small brown one and a larger one which is black with longitudinal yellow bars, is believed also by some to act as a love potion; others again say that it will produce craziness. In reality this insect is a poison, but may be used in medicine as a diuretic and vesicatory. The Ladinos believe that practically all the Indians and Creoles of 832 [825] [278]

832 the Mosquito Coast make current use of these various "remedies," and that the Miskito women have the habit of mixing from time to time a small portion of their menstrual blood in the wabul for her husband, in order to keep the latter's affection.

582 Premarriage ordeals.—Before a young Sumu is allowed to have a wife he must give proof of his ability to shoulder the responsibilities of married life—that he is indeed a man. A council of the elder men of the village or district will investigate any complaint brought against the would-be bridegroom and he has to undergo certain ordeals. The latter consist of more or less rigid fasting, flogging, scarification, and the like. If he cries out or merely moans he will have to submit to the ordeal on a future occasion. The candidate for marriage bends down his bare back, whereupon all the married men punch him as hard as they can with their elbow. He endures the pain without a groan, for the women are there as spectators of his powers of endurance. If he is unpopular he may receive a severe beating, and occasionally accidents arise in this manner. Then an elderly man beats him with a whip made from tapir hide, consisting of two strings twisted like a rope, and having about 1 inch diameter. A young man is not considered worthy of a wife unless he is able to endure this ordeal with fortitude. If he has stolidly endured all these pains he is allowed to marry. He makes a canoe, bows and arrows, and other weapons, and he brings game and firewood to his fiancée. He also prepares the plantation for his prospective wife in order to prove that he is able to perform the duties of a future family head.

Marriage taboos.—The children of two brothers or of two sisters are considered real brothers and sisters and they are not allowed to marry each other. The ban against the marriage of these cousins probably owes its origin to the fact that such children were often really half brothers and half sisters. Upon the death of his wife a man generally married her sister; similarly, if a woman had lost her husband, she was taken in marriage by her brother-in-law. For that reason the names for stepfather and father's brother, on the one hand, and for stepmother and mother's sister are identical in most of the dialects spoken on the Mosquito Coast. On the other hand, the children of brother and sister are not considered blood relatives, and a union between such cousins is the common, and originally perhaps the only, marriage allowed. Unions of this kind are still encouraged to this day, for it is felt that family ties are strengthened thereby.

Marriage between an Indian and a near relative of his *libra* or "covenant friend," and his *lapya* or "birth friend" is also banned, although such connections are not blood relations (M.: *taya;* T.: *môih;* P.: *wanâih;* U.: *wanih*).

Betrothal and trial marriage.—The children are sometimes 584
engaged by their respective parents while still in early infancy, even
at the age of 5 or 6 years. The young boy makes his fiancée and her
parents a small present, and helps them occasionally in their work.
When she arrives at the age of puberty (about 10 years) he takes her
as his wife. The man is considered a member of his wife's family [591]
and he goes to live in the house of his parents-in-law. When the
family enlarges he will build a house of his own near by. Perhaps
a misunderstanding of the above facts has led M. W. (309) to state
that a system of trial marriage existed in those days among the Miskito.
According to this author the probationary period lasted about
two years, at the end of which a feast was prepared and then the
union was considered legitimate, there being no ceremony. To-day [582]
the young man marries generally at the age of from 16 to 18, the girl
at about 12.

Wedding.—Exquemelin (Engl. edit.: 253; French edit.: II, 267–268) 585
gives the following account of the marriage ceremony of the
Miskito during the latter part of the seventeenth century. The
father, after assuring himself that the lover was an expert hunter and
fisher, ordered his daughter to bring a calabash of a beverage prepared
from pineapples and honey; the suitor drank one-half of the
contents and then tendered the remainder to his future wife to drink.
According to this same author the buccaneers had the habit of buying 583
a Miskito woman for a knife, ax, or hatchet, upon their arrival at
Cabo Gracias a Dios. She was obliged to remain with him during
the time he stayed at the settlement and to supply him with the
products of the plantation, while he went out hunting and fishing.
(Exquemelin, Engl. edit.: 249).

Among the Sumu the nuptial ceremony is performed by an elderly 585
man who first gives the couple a long talk. Then the two aspirants
join the thumb of the right hand, whereupon he separates their hands
by cutting through with his own hand. There is no record of the
chiefs having possessed the *jus primæ noctis* as appears to have been
the case with the Chorotega (Orotiña) of the Pacific coast of Nicaragua
and Costa Rica. Marriage with other tribes was not permitted [582]
in former days by the Sumu, and the children of strangers were killed.
This accounts for the fact that the Sumu have kept themselves free
from foreign admixtures, whereas the Miskito intermarry with all
races and absorb everything. The Sumu are very jealous of their [152]
wives and until recent times did not allow them to converse with
strangers.

Mother-in-law taboo.—As soon as the marriage ceremony has 606
taken place the young Sumu husband must not speak any more to
his mother-in-law, nor even look at her. When he is at home she
remains in her own apartment, which is separated from the remainder

606 of the house by a partition of bark cloth or imported calico. After he has left she comes out and follows her usual occupations. Upon his return he must give warning by striking the boat with the paddle or pole before proceeding to the hut, and she retires immediately to her own apartment. When she returns from the plantation or from fishing she must likewise give notice, and he walks away for a few minutes, until she has reached her quarters. Should the two meet unexpectedly she will quickly throw a cloth over her head, and he will pass on, turning his face away from her. Should, however, he purposely look at her, or fail to give the prescribed warning upon his return, she will consider this an insult for which she will demand payment through a third person.

This custom appears to exist among all the Sumu subtribes; it is also found among the Miskito of the upper Rio Coco, who are largely mixed with the Sumu, but it has not been observed in other parts of the Mosquito Coast. The origin of this custom is somewhat obscure, and I was unable to obtain from the Indians any satisfactory explanation regarding it. The usual answer is that they observe it because it has been handed down to them by their ancestors. According to Grossmann (b: 4), each mother stands under the special protection of the tapir, who is angry at the man who has robbed her of her daughter, and only refrains from punishing him on condition that he never looks on her. Therefore the man who has looked on his mother-in-law is fated to meet his death from the enraged tapir, unless absolved by making a payment to the wronged woman.

In former days the same taboo existed among the Miskito between a man and his sister-in-law, the wife of his birth friend (*lapya*) and the wife of his covenant friend (*libra*); or between a woman and her brother-in-law, and the husbands of both her *lapya* and *libra*.

MENSTRUAL SECLUSION.—During the menstrual periods (M.: 841 *mairin siknis* "woman sickness," *kati siknis* "monthly sickness"; S.: *tiñ dutni, tiñ dutka* "bad hand") the woman is considered unclean and she is shunned by her husband. She must not touch any food intended for other people, otherwise the latter may die. Formerly the young girl had to undergo certain puberty ordeals at the first menstrual period, but I was unable to obtain any details relating thereto.

When the Miskito woman is inconvenienced in the accustomed manner, she occupies a small temporary hut (M.: *tala watla* "blood house") built by her husband at a few hundred yards from the settlement. She remains there a couple of days. At night one of the other women joins her to keep her company, but to all the men, her husband included, the hut is taboo. While in this state of impurity the woman must not be seen by a sukya, for that would weaken the latter's connection with the spirits, and perhaps even cause his death. At the conclusion of the third day the woman bathes herself 841 in a neighboring creek and then rejoins her family. All cooking or drinking vessels used by her during this period are broken and thrown away.

Among the Sumu similar beliefs are held with regard to menstruation. The woman, however, never leaves her home, but she remains secluded in a corner of the house, a cloth partition separating her quarters from the rest of the hut. The Miskito habit of retiring to a provisional ranch or "going to the bush" (M.: *untara dimaya;* T., P.: *asañpas kana;* U.: *asañpas awañ*) has never been practiced by the Sumu, and it would appear as if it was in former days also unknown among the Miskito. In fact the Sumu state that the menstruous woman must keep away from the bush, where she might be attacked by jaguars, pumas, or snakes, or where she might be seduced by a spirit in anthropomorphic or zoömorphic form. When the three days are over the woman takes a steam bath at home. The latter is prepared by heating a few large white stones and then pouring water upon them, while the woman will bend over them with a thick blanket thrown over the naked body. After this she is no longer considered unclean.

CELIBACY.—Celibacy is considered as something abnormal and 589 uncanny among the Indians; people leading presumably an irreproachable celibate life are supposed to practice sexual intercourse with spirits.

PROSTITUTION.—Prostitution is now met with among the Miskito 548 inhabiting such settlements as have a large percentage of foreigners or Ladinos, but this has never been a recognized institution as among the more civilized tribes of Mexico and Central America.

POLYGAMY.—Polygamy exists, but it is not very common, and is 595 generally limited to men of rank, as sorcerers. I have known Indians with 4 and even 5 or 6 wives, who all lived under the same roof. Each one of the women had her own hearth and cooking utensils and she prepared the food for herself and her children. The husband ate wherever he preferred. When he wished to buy something for his favorite wife he must treat the others alike in order to avoid scenes of jealousy which, it must be said, are very rare. The women have rarely a dispute with each other; sometimes they are all sisters, the oldest one, however, being generally the mistress of the house. They call each other *lakma* (M.) or *kaltiñ* (S.). Sometimes an Indian with wife and children may adopt a young orphan girl with the intention of making her his wife when she arrives at puberty.

According to Henderson (223) the Miskito King George, who governed at the beginning of the nineteenth century, had as many as 22 wives. M. W. (309) and Sloane (a: I, p. LXXVII) mention the existence of polygamy for this tribe; elsewhere, however, the

595 last-named author (b: IV, 279) states that the Miskito have only one wife. Dampier (I, 9) and Jeffery (45) likewise state that the Miskito marry but one wife with whom they live until death separates them.

586 Divorce.—Occasionally husband and wife separate by mutual consent, the children remaining in charge of the mother. A woman is generally abandoned by her husband if she does not give birth to any children. The young husband does not remain at the hut of his parents-in-law when he is sick, but returns home to undergo treatment; in case his disease is incurable, or if he is lazy or cruel, he may not be admitted again at the house of his parents-in-law, and the marriage is then considered dissolved. The husband has, however, the right to claim payment for all the presents he has made to his wife or to her family.

587 Remarriage.—If a widow wishes to remarry she must be bought from the heirs, that is, the relations of her dead husband. Such a payment is known as "widow money" (M.: *pyarka mana;* T., P.: *tiñmak minit;* U.: *pyarka makalnak*). The widow is considered the property of her husband and with the death of the latter passes to his relations.

In no case is a widow allowed to remarry until the festival of the dead (M.: *sihkro, sikro;* S.: *saû*) has taken place, which is about one year after the death of her husband. In case the future husband agrees to have this festival celebrated at his own expense, he need not pay anything else for the widow. The author who wrote about 1699 under the initials M. W. (309) was evidently mistaken in stating that among the Miskito the widow was allowed to remarry three days after the death of her husband. According to Exquemelin (Engl. edit.: 254), who wrote about the same period, this action could not take place until two years later.

CHILDREN: THEIR BIRTH AND EDUCATION

844 Seclusion at childbirth.—The prospective Miskito mother occupies a small hut (*dâukan watla*), built for her by her husband in the bush, at a short distance from her home, just as she does during the menstrual period. She remains there about two weeks, accompanied by a female relation or friend. She has to observe similar regulations as at the menses, for she is considered impure and may pollute the house and contaminate the other inmates. She is particularly exposed to attack from snakes, beasts, and supernatural beings, and neither she nor her child must be seen by the sukya. She must also abstain from certain food, not only on account of her own well-being, but also on that of the community as a whole. The Sumu woman, however, accouches in a corner of the hut, which has been screened off either with bark cloth or with thatch.

844 Delivery.—Only females are present at childbirth, the elder or more experienced ones acting as midwives. The methods employed to hasten delivery are in general very brutal, and they lead occasionally to the death of both mother and child. One of the befriended persons present severs the navel string with the aid of a sharpened piece of bamboo or a wood splinter, and then ties it with a cotton thread. In virtue of this act she will henceforth be considered as a [608] blood relation to the newborn child and the latter's parents as well, and they call each other reciprocally *lapya* or *lahpya*. This corresponds loosely to the *compadre* and *comadre* system of the Ladinos. The *lapya* appears to have been limited in former days to the Miskito, but lately it has spread to the other tribes of the Mosquito Coast—Sumu, Rama, and Paya. The afterbirth is buried by one of the women as soon as it is expelled. The same is also done with the umbilical cord, in order to prevent pigs, dogs, or other animals from eating it up, which may result in sickness or death for the baby.

846 Couvade.—Traces of the couvade may be observed among both Miskito and Sumu. During the first days of the newborn child the father will refrain from hard work and keep out of the bush. He will also abstain from certain foods and from salt and chili pepper. The mother also has to keep a diet. Exquemelin (Engl. edit.: 253) denies the existence of the couvade among the Miskito, but the actual facts have probably escaped his observation. This author states that the mother bathes her baby at the next river, wraps it up in a *cabalas* (=*kwala* "cloth") and then follows her usual occupation. According to my various informants the bath of the mother and the child is postponed until the third day after delivery. But the mother is considered impure for from one to two weeks longer. After that period has elapsed she may return to her husband, who prepares a feast with food and drink in honor of the baby and the *lapya*.

843 826 Birthmarks.—Birthmarks (M. and S.: *wasaki*) are ascribed by both tribes to the failure of the mother to obtain during pregnancy a certain article of food for which she had a vehement desire. The Indians supply, if possible, a woman *enciente* with any kind of food for which she may ask. If during that state she should have a craving for a slice of pineapple the husband will do his utmost to procure the fruit. Should the prospective mother learn that it is impossible to obtain it, and then thoughtlessly pass her hand over her head, breast, or arm, the child would be born in due time with the mark of a pineapple at the corresponding part of the body. A somewhat similar belief exists among the ignorant people in large areas in Europe.

826 A certain skin disease is found sometimes on the newly born child, and is known among the Miskito by the name *dus arbisa* "gnawing of trees." Its origin is traced to the fact that the mother, while *enciente*,

826 heard the peculiar sound produced by two trees rubbing against each other during high wind.

842 Sterility and abortion.—Sterility is considered a disgrace, and the average husband will abandon his wife if she is unable to bear
[847] children. Abortion and prevention of pregnancy are accomplished by the use of certain herbs. In general the Indian woman is very pro-
[165] lific, but infant mortality is also very high.

847 Infanticide.—In former days babies of the female sex were often exposed and left to die, as they were supposed to bring ill luck. Male children are always received with great joy, which the father manifests by shooting off his gun. Deformed children were buried alive in olden days, as they were supposed to be possessed by an evil spirit, or to have been begotten by such one. A similar belief is held by many other tribes in both Americas and accounts for the total absence or scarcity of crippled persons in such regions.

847 Twins were also exposed, as they were said to be a proof of the wife's disloyalty to her husband; the latter considered that only one
845 of the two infants could possibly be his. If twins were of different sex the female was always killed. Lehmann (c: I, 405) states among the Miskito the red dog (*páūan*) is the master of the twins, and that for that reason these Indians whip dogs at the birth of twins (*páūnki*), but this report needs confirmation.

854 Child carrying.—The women carry their children in a long cloth which they sling over the back, tying the two ends together in front at the breast. This way the mother is not prevented from following her usual occupation, as both her hands are left free, while the child is firmly secured in a safe and comfortable position. The prevalence
[142] of bowlegs among these Indians may possibly be ascribed to this manner of carrying the infants.

855 Care of children.—The Indian child receives little attention from its parents, yet it rarely cries. The parents have, however, great patience toward their offspring, and they seldom chastise a naughty child. Should they, however, lose their patience and seize the whip, they may administer fearful beatings, but such cases are extremely rare. Lullaby songs are rarely heard, but the parents tell their offspring fables, legends, and fairy tales.

862 The last child is not generally weaned until the fourth year and sometimes even longer. I have observed cases among the Miskito where the young boys alternated their mother's breast with their father's tobacco pipe.

868 Education.—As the child grows up it is made acquainted with the occupations of its parents. The boy accompanies his father on hunting and fishing journeys as soon as he is strong enough to do so. The father makes toys for him, as diminutive canoes and paddles; later he obtains small bows and arrows in order to practice shooting at birds

and fish. The girls stay at home and learn the domestic arts, and 868
they accompany the mother when the latter fishes with the hook or
goes to the plantation.

Old men are very fond of teaching or lecturing (M.: *smalkaya;* 861
T., P.: *sumalnin;* U.: *sumalnaka*) to the young men whom they generally accuse of being very headstrong; this practice is also current among the old women with regard to the girls. The hearer's ancestors are always represented to him as models of virtue and good conduct. This form of teaching corresponds roughly to that of the sermon in Christian and other churches.

DEATH AND MOURNING

Agony.—The Miskito, as well as the Sumu, formerly used to starve 734
those who were near the point of death, thinking that it was of no
use to keep on feeding them. The Sumu are said to have carried the 763
moribund in the bush to let him die there so as not to be compelled
to move away, for in former days the settlement was abandoned at
the occurrence of such a calamity. Occasionally a dying person was
strangled to relieve his sufferings; first, however, his vitality was
tested by placing him in an awkward position, and if he remained
motionless, he was choked. In general it must be said that the aged [888]
and the sick are much neglected, but there are, of course, many cases
to be cited to the contrary.

Death.—Death is supposed to be due, not to natural causes, but 761
to the agency of sorcery or evil spirits. A gun is sometimes fired off
at the occurrence of a calamity, in order to clear the house of the
demons. The women relations of the deceased immediately try to 763
injure themselves by knocking their heads against the house posts, or
they attempt to commit suicide by hanging or drowning. All this is,
however, only pretense to a large extent, for they know that they
will be prevented by the other persons present from harming themselves; they rarely make any effort to injure themselves when there
is no one about.

The female relations of the deceased cut their hair off; according 765
to Bell (a: 255; b: 90) this is done under the idea that no one should handle it after the dead person. In former days the Ulwa Indians used to cut their hair off also at the death of their wife (Wickham, b: 208), but nowadays the men of both tribes always keep their hair cut short.

The name of the deceased person must never be mentioned in the
presence of his or her relations, to whom that would constitute a
grave offense. The spirit is always an object of dread and it hovers [775]
around its former home; it is feared that it might materialize by pronouncing its name.

765 In the evening succeeding the death of a person a sort of "wake" is celebrated, to which the entire village is invited. Plenty of food and intoxicants are served to the guests, and a cow is butchered for its meat in case cattle are raised in the neighborhood.

Mourning.—When a death occurs in a Miskito village all the neighbors assemble, and the women begin to lament one after the other. First comes the turn of the near relatives, as the wife of the deceased person. She throws a large cloth over her head and sits at the side of the dead body, leaning over him to smell the scent, which is the equivalent to our custom of kissing. Then she begins a sort of crying song or dirge in which she eulogizes the departed, enumerating his good qualities, real or supposed. This song has but one tune and time, but the words are improvised. She asks him why he has left her, if she did not treat him well, if she did not love him enough, and what wrong she could possibly have done him. She keeps on as follows: Who will take care of myself and of your children now? You were such a good husband! You were such an excellent hunter! You never missed the mark and kept us always well supplied with meat! You were so skillful in making plantations; in handling the canoe, the gun, bow and arrow, ax, etc.! We are all so sad now and will never be happy again! Your children are always asking for you! She then menaces the one responsible for this calamity, for death is attributed to sorcery. As she keeps on in this manner, her feelings are worked up, and the final phrases are continually interrupted by sobs. After having lamented in this manner for about half an hour, she dries her tears and resumes her usual occupation as if nothing had happened. One of the other women will then cry over the dead body. This manner of mourning is repeated by the female relations for two weeks after the death of a person, twice a day, a little before daybreak and again at sunset. After this period it may be done by the mourning woman whenever she is sad and reminded of the dead.

Bell has recorded the following song of a Miskito girl from Rio Wawa, mourning for her dead mother; he gives it in English (b:91) and in Miskito (b: 312):

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Alas, mother, poor mother! Alas, mother, where have you gone?
    Here are your children crying for you;
Yesterday we were talking together, but now you are lying there.
Alas, mother, did you go from us in anger?
    Did we not love you?
Your husband sits outside with his head hung down.
Here the women are sitting with their heads covered,
    All for love of you.
But you have abandoned us.
Alas, that I shall never see your face again;
That I shall never hear your voice again.

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932

SA15 Mosquito SA15

The men never shed any tears at the death of their near relations, but they will break out in low lamentations. Upon the death of his wife the Miskito Indian will exclaim as follows: Why did you leave me? Who is going to cook my food now? Who is going to wash my clothes now? Who is going to raise your children? How unfortunate am I! I shall never be happy again! Your children are always asking for you! 765

This manner of mourning is a common occurrence at the Miskito villages. It is also practiced by the Indians in the Gran Chaco and the Guianas. The Sumu women will also chant eulogiums upon the deceased, but they manifest their sorrow in a much quieter manner.

BURIAL CUSTOMS

Burial by simple inhumation is the present practice. The Miskito dress the deceased in his best clothes and place him in a canoe cut crosswise in two parts, one half of it serving as cover. The Sumu simply wrap the body in bark cloth, as did the Miskito in former days, according to Sloane (b: 279) and Jefferys (46). These authors state that the Miskito sewed the dead in a mat, and did not lay the body in the grave lengthwise, but placed it upright on the feet, with the face directly to the east. Nowadays, however, among both tribes the dead person is laid lengthwise on its back to a depth of 4 or 5 feet. 764

Miskito burial customs.—The burial ground is generally a short distance from the village. While the corpse is being carried thereto the female relatives renew the mourning and try to injure themselves, but they are watched by the others and are not allowed to harm themselves seriously. Livestock is kept away from the burial ground, as the spirit of the deceased is liable to enter it and cause it to die.

Formerly all the personal property of the deceased, as his tools, ornaments, dogs, etc., were put in the grave, in order to assure him a livelihood in the other world. Division of labor continues in the other life, and archeological investigations from various parts of America have shown that spindle whorls are never found in the same graves as stone celts. The hair of the female relatives is also joined to the corpse. A pine-wood torch is also added in order to guide the latter during his long journey to the hereafter. A small canoe is put in the grave, for the voyage to the underworld has to be effected partly on water, and that country is surrounded by a river which has to be crossed with the aid of a dog. For that reason a dog was also killed at each burial. Nowadays all articles put in the grave are broken so as to prevent the stealing of them, but generally only the useless property of the deceased is buried with him, while the remainder is kept by his family. Formerly even his livestock had to be killed, and the plantations and fruit trees destroyed, so that the living should

764 not "rob the dead," thus causing the latter's spirit to linger about doing all sorts of mischief. The property of a deceased is known by the name *platira* (M.) and *bawan, bawani* (S.).

According to Exquemelin (French ed.: II, 275) the Miskito also formerly killed the slaves and servants at the death of a chief, in order to serve their master in the other world, a custom found in ancient America among the civilized tribes from Mexico to Peru. Even his priest (*sukya?*) was put to death to be at his service in the hereafter. This author goes on to say that at such an occasion the Miskito had the intention of sacrificing a Portuguese slave who had lost an eye by an arrow shot. But the latter persuaded the Indians that only men without any physical defect would be allowed in the future world and that, besides, they were not paying due respect to the deceased by giving him as servant a one-eyed man when there were so many with two eyes who could be used for this purpose. To this the Miskito agreed and the Portuguese's life was spared.

A small hut is erected over the grave, whereto the women repair every day in order to light a fire and prepare food and drink for the deceased. These viands are renewed every day, and are supposed to be consumed by the spirit or soul (*isiñni*) of the dead person. In former days the quality of such food was apparently far superior to that found nowadays on the graves, for Exquemelin (Engl. ed.: 254) makes the following statement: "I have oftentimes with my own hands taken away these offerings and eaten them instead of other victuals. To this I was moved, because I knew that the fruits used on these occasions were the choicest and ripest of all others, as also the liquors of the best sort they made use of for their greatest regale and pleasure."

765 Secondary burials appear to have been practiced formerly by the Miskito. According to Exquemelin (Engl. ed.: 254; French ed.: II, 274) the widow opened the grave [66] of her husband about one year after burial. Owing to the great humidity the body would soon decompose. She scraped and washed the bones and dried them in the sun. Then she placed them in a *cabala*,[67] a certain pouch or satchel, which she had to carry on her back during the daytime, and upon which she slept at night. She had to keep this up for a whole year, after which she hung the bag with the bones to the post of her house for another year. After that period she was allowed to remarry. If she had no house of her own she hung the bones at the door of that of her next neighbor or relation. The above act was not performed if the deceased was a single man, but food was carried to his grave. The practice of scraping the bones was also performed by the Indian

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[66] This author does not state where the corpse was buried in those days, but we learn from M. W. (309) that the Miskito buried their dead in their huts.

[67] *Kwala* is the Miskito name for cloth.

woman if her husband was a buccaneer, but men were not bound to 765
carry it out at the death of their wife. Exquemelin does not state what was done ultimately with the bones. The custom points toward the practice of endo cannibalism, which was widespread in South America, and which consisted of grinding up the bones of the deceased and consuming them in a drink. Exhumation has not been mentioned from the Mosquito Coast by subsequent travelers.

SUMU BURIAL CUSTOMS.—Our knowledge regarding the former 764
burial customs of the Sumu is more rudimentary. Cremation and secondary urn burial appear to have been made use of occasionally; in the former case the ashes were placed in an earthen vessel, as did the more advanced tribes of the Pacific slope of Honduras and Nicaragua. The common people, however, were probably merely inhumed.

On account of the dense jungle the old burial grounds are difficult to discover. Sometimes they are indicated by low mounds which yield fragments of pottery and metates, or spindle whorls, greenstone beads, etc. A large one of these burial sites is found at the bank of Rio Punta Gorda, near its junction with Rio Pejivalle; smaller ones can be found in many other parts of the coast. In certain regions of the Atlantic slope of Honduras, apparently occupied formerly by the Paya, as at Bonito Oriental, Piedra Blanca, and Siriboya, there are high mounds surrounded by walls.

In Chontales (Nicaragua), which department was formerly occu- 765
pied by the Ulwa, secondary burial was practiced; the remains were deposited upon the summit of a hill or in an artificial mound in the savanna. The spot was often marked with a cairn of loose rocks constructed in the shape of a parallelogram, varying greatly in size. The sides of these structures were either sloped or perpendicular, and the edge of the upper surface was furnished with a parapet. Fragments of rude statues placed on them have been found, and it would appear as if there were one or several large ones in the center and a small one at each corner. Boyle (a: 43–44) describes a very large cairn, measuring about 58 by 40 yards and close to 10 feet in height, which stood in the neighborhood of La Libertad on the summit of a mound 60 to 70 feet high.

Rogers (107) gives a short description of masks for the faces of 764
the dead chiefs brought about 1775 from the interior of the Mos-
quito Coast, undoubtedly from the Sumu country. They were made 532
of clay mixed sometimes with gold dust and were said to be the likeness of chiefs or other prominent persons who had been buried at such places. In many parts of America such face masks were used on mummies; we do not know, however, if the art of mummification was known on the Mosquito Coast. This practice had been observed by Columbus at Cariay (Atlantic coast of Costa Rica) in 1502 and was probably limited to men of rank. Rogers has de-

764 532 picted eight of the above-named masks; most of them have their backs concaved in a cylindrical form, by which we might imagine that they were parts of sepulchral urns. (See also Roberts, pp. 299–300.)

Catching the soul of a deceased person.—Upon the death of 775 a person the soul (M.: *isiñni*) or "shadow," as the Creoles say, leaves the body and remains about the house. After the burial it is "caught" by the sukya and taken to the grave; otherwise it will roam about and do all sorts of mischief. This custom has been introduced among the Miskito by the West Indian Negroes; recently it has spread to the Twahka and Panamaka.

This action takes place at night by a very dim light. The task of the sukya appears to be by no means easy. Sometimes he fails to catch the soul on the first night and has to do everything over again on the following day. He throws himself into a state of ecstasy and then dances around the bed of the deceased, over which a white cotton sheet has been spread. Then he sits down in a hammock which has been slung near by and he communicates the messages received from the dead during his supernatural state. The latter might give him the names of the persons who owe him some money or have failed to return a borrowed object. If he owns some young trees, the fruits of which he has not yet tasted, he will order them cut down without any further delay. Toward daybreak, when all the people present are more or less drunk, for intoxicating beverages are served to all the guests, the sukya seizes some insect, generally a firefly or a beetle, which he pretends to be the soul of the deceased. He wraps it up quickly in the bed sheet or incloses it in a bottle and then takes it to the grave.

Some of these sorcerers are said to be able to catch the soul of Indians who have died far away from home. This is, however, a more difficult task, as the soul may keep him waiting for a whole week, until it condescends to be taken to its final resting place. Formerly the soul was supposed to enter animals or other objects belonging to the deceased, and these had to be killed or broken to drive the intruder out.

THE HEREAFTER

Both tribes believe in the immortality of the soul and its translation to a realm of happiness and bliss. Remains of this belief are seen in the burial customs, for certain objects are given to the dead which are indispensable to him during his long journey to that final resting place. Some Indians make the future existence dependent [177] on present conduct, but this idea has undoubtedly been borrowed from Christianity.

The land of hereafter of the Miskito is far superior to the vale of tears in which we live; it is well stocked with all their favorite game, fish, and other food, as well as drink. Green turtles are plentiful and may easily be caught, and in the forests are large droves of peccaries and monkeys which may be killed at will. Fruit trees are continually in bearing and, like the other food plants there, do not need to be replanted. There are no other people there but Miskito; the paradise is unattainable to Sumu, Rama, Paya, and other tribes, or to foreigners. 775

JOURNEY TO THE HEREAFTER (MISKITO).—The following story, dealing with the soul's journey to the underworld or paradise, is well known to the Miskito inhabiting the Nicaraguan coast, but not those living on Rio Coco and in Honduras. 775 773

A Miskito, named *Nakili* or *Naklili*, had lost his wife whom he loved very much. He went to her grave and there suddenly saw himself in the presence of her disembodied soul (*isiñni*). The latter *was only about 2 feet high, and informed him of her starting now* her journey to the *Yapti-misri*.[illegible] He wished to accompany her, but she told him that such a thing was out of the question, since he was still alive. But he insisted and was not to be persuaded to remain behind, and so they started out together. She led the way and turned into a very narrow trail, which he had never seen before.

They arrived at a place where there were many moths (*sampapa*) flying about. She was afraid of them and did not dare to proceed, but he chased them away and they continued their march.

After a while the trail led between two low pine trees (*ñuas*), which were so close together that the wife could barely pass; the husband, being still in his normal size, was unable to squeeze himself through, but merely walked around this obstacle. According to another version the two trees were constantly moving to and fro, annihilating those persons who had behaved badly on earth. Some again claim that the safe passing of this obstacle was merely a matter of dexterity.

They continued their journey and came to a precipice which was spanned by a bridge of the width of a human hair. Below there was a huge pot of boiling water attended by *sikla* birds. The wife being of reduced size and weight was able to walk over this narrow bridge, but *Nakili* did not find the distance across very great, and so he jumped it.

Then they arrived at a very large river, where there was a canoe paddled by four toads (*sukliñ*).[illegible] This stream swarmed with a small variety of fish, similar to a sardine, and called *blim* (or *bilim*, *bilam*),

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[illegible] Lit.: "Mother-scorpion," a sort of personified hereafter and heretofore.

[illegible] According to some Indians this canoe was paddled by a dog.

775 which the soul took for sharks (*ilili*). On the opposite side they saw the country of the *Yapti-misri;* every one there appeared to be 773 happy. The souls of those persons who had not led a righteous life were upset with the boat and devoured by the sardines. The wife was taken over in the canoe by the toads, while he managed to swim over.

On the other side they were received by the *Yapti-misri*, a very tall, stout woman with many breasts, to whom the inhabitants came occasionally to suck like babies. She appeared to be rather angry at *Nakili* for having come, and ordered him to go back to the earth again. He implored her to let him remain, as he loved his wife so much and did not wish to be separated from her. She agreed finally to let him stay.

In this country no one had to work; there was plenty of excellent food and drink, and there was no lack of amusements. But after staying there for some time, *Nakili* longed to go back to earth, in order to see his children again. *Yapti-misri* allowed him to go on condition that he would never return to the hereafter until after his death. She placed him in a huge bamboo rod which she deposited on the river. After a while he noticed from the high waves that he was on the sea, and finally a gigantic breaker threw him on the shore, just in front of his own hut.

776 JOURNEY TO THE HEREAFTER (SUMU).—After death the soul undertakes its pilgrimage to *Obul* or *Ubul* (lit.: "mottled dwelling"), that is, the paradise, which is situated under the earth toward the east, where the sun rises.

On its journey the soul is attacked by macaws (*dü awa*) and moths (*tapam yula*) which attempt to bite it; it defends itself with the aid of two sticks of wood tied together with cotton thread in the shape of a cross, and which are always joined to the deceased person before burial.

Then the soul is met by a gigantic worm, which devours the women who have not always been faithful to their husbands. Men are not molested by this monster, as they make themselves invulnerable by attaching to the body a coat of cockles (*ulamak*).

The road then leads along the abode of a small black lizard living on trees, and called *kasdü*, which tries to catch the soul and deliver it to a toad (*muku*); the latter has a large pot with boiling water on the fire, and throws all the bad people therein. But the soul may easily escape from final destruction by offering some beads to the *kasdü*, who is very fond of such ornaments, and by giving likewise some small present to the toad.

The next stage is a high, slippery hill, called *Uy Asañ*, which has to be climbed. The relatives of the deceased smear the soles of his feet with beeswax (*balas*) in order to facilitate his ascending the hill.

This obstacle overcome, the soul finally makes its entry into *Obul*, the land of plenty.[illegible] 775

THE FESTIVAL OF THE DEAD

The festival of the dead (M.: *sikro, sihkro;* S.: *sâu*) is the most important of the bacchanalian orgies of these two tribes. Its real significance appears to be unknown to the large majority of the present-day Indians; it is certain, however, that it has some connection with the journey of the souls of the deceased to the hereafter. 765.

THE SIKRO OF THE MISKITO.—To most Miskito the *sikro* of to-day is only an occasion for merrymaking and getting drunk. Originally only one *sikro* was made for each deceased person, but nowadays the Indians repeat this feast several times in order to have an excuse for a drinking bout. The custom can still be observed among the "heathen" Miskito of the upper Rio Coco and of Honduras. In the remaining districts of the Mosquito Coast nearly all the Indians belonging to this tribe have been converted to Christianity.

The *sikro* takes place about a year after a death, or rather as soon as the field of sweet cassava, planted especially for this purpose, has come into maturity. Although the Miskito make a great variety of intoxicating drinks (*misla*), the one consumed on such an occasion is invariably prepared from cassava. The fermented root of this plant is generally kept in casks obtained from the foreign merchants, but in former days the drink was left to ferment in large homemade earthenware vessels (*sumi*). The expenses of the feast are borne by the relatives of the deceased, who will butcher one or two head of cattle for this purpose, but all the neighbors lend a hand at the preparation of food and drink, and they even help at the planting and reaping of the cassava.

All the men and many of the women from the neighboring settlements are expected to come, and they begin to arrive, dressed in their best attire, about sundown on the specified day. The festival lasts until all the food and drink has been consumed, that is, two or three days. The women keep apart by themselves, and do not mingle with the men, except in order to pass the calabashes of drink around from one of the guests to the other. Occasionally both sexes

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[illegible] The Sumu never kill any of the various creatures which they will have to meet on their final journey. When they deprive a toad of its skin for the making of a drumhead, they do not kill this amphibian, but release it again afterwards, and give it a few berries from a certain tree as a payment for its skin. The parents also admonish their children not to ill-treat animals, especially such as may be useful to them on the voyage to the hereafter. Similar conceptions are met with among primitive Indian tribes in various parts of the Americas who have had little or no intercourse with Christians. [825]

Occasionally both sexes

765 perform very "tame" dances which they have apparently learned from the foreigners.[a] One dance, which does not lack a certain grace,
535 is performed by the young women, forming a half circle. They place the left arm around the neck of their neighbor and perform slow movements of the body to the rhythm of calabash rattles which they hold in the right hand. Occasionally they utter a soft melancholy song.

Several young men are continually playing reed flutes or flageolets
765 (*bra*), while others beat a skin membrane drum (*kuñbi*) with the palm
533 of the hand. Most of the "music" performed consists of conventional imitations of the voice of animals or birds; the dancers accompany it by imitating the gait or the actions of the particular animal or bird.

765 Toward midnight two or three old men play on very long, stout bamboo flutes, which produce such an unearthly noise as to really scare a stranger. These instruments are said to be blown in order to direct to the feast two or three masqueraded figures which are supposed to come from the forest. As soon as the latter approach the hut all the women run inside, for they are not supposed to see them. The relatives of the deceased person immediately cover their faces with a cloth and then begin to lament and cry, for the masqueraded persons have some connection with the departed one. They try to injure themselves by knocking the head against the house posts, or by inflicting wounds on themselves with the aid of arms, rocks, or other objects, but the guests intercede and prevent them from harming themselves in a serious way. At a *sikro* on Rio Plátano I was witness when an old woman made a deep cut in her arm with the aid of an old, rusty machete. The maskers walk a few times around the hut, but after having been engaged in conversation by the sukya they return to the bush whence they had come. In order to induce them to depart some of the men make a strange noise on a flute (*yul*) made from the *klisañ* reed and having some beeswax applied to the mouthpiece. As soon as they have left the women dry their tears, and they are again as happy as before, for they know now that their deceased relative will within a short time arrive safely at the land of hereafter.

The head and shoulder piece of the masquerade dress is made of a piece of tanned skin or of the inner bark of certain trees; it is painted red and black. Holes are made in the part covering the face to correspond to the wearer's eyes. Dry grass is used to simulate hair, while a crinolinelike fringe of palm leaves depends from the shoulder piece, so that nothing but the legs of the wearer are visible. The headpiece is surmounted by an upright bar of light wood with the likeness (*lilka*) of a certain animal or object. All

[a] [At the festival of the dead—Analyst]

these masks are known by the general name of *yapti*, "mother," 765
yet one is male and the other female, while the third one (if there be one) is said to be the young. These figures are supposed to represent the spirit of some animal, it appears, and they had originally perhaps some totemistic significance. Of the various figures which may appear at a *sikro* I have recorded the following: *Twāina* (sawfish) *yapti*, *ilili* (shark) *yapti*, *krikam* (sea gull) *yapti*, *tilba* (tapir) *yapti*, *kyaki* (agouti) *yapti*, *pura* (above, over?) *yapti*, *siksa* (banana) *yapti*, and *bulbul* (cassava roasted in the ashes?) *yapti*.

The writer was present at a *sikro* celebrated in 1921 at a Miskito village situated at the mouth of Rio Plátano (Honduras), at which the symbol of the *twāina-yapti* appeared. The two large figures were said to be the father (*āisa*) and the mother (*yapti*), while the smaller one was the child (*luhpya*). Each one of these three figures was surmounted by a bar of balsa wood painted in red and black, and provided with teeth on each side so as to simulate the bill of a sawfish (*twāina*). On the larger figures this bar was about 4 to 5 feet long, 5 to 6 inches wide, and 3 to 4 inches thick, while the small one measured only 3 feet in length and 4 inches in width.

At another *sikro*, celebrated in the presence of the writer in 1921 at Tausin, on an island in Caratasca Lagoon, there appeared only two figures, male and female, of practically the same size, and called *pura-yapti*. The bars of balsa wood surmounting the masquerade dress measured about 3 feet; their upper part was carved in the semblance of a human head, on which an old palm leaf hat was placed. Sticks inserted at right angles represented the arms. Both figures were dressed and painted partially in red and black, and had wooden pipes in their mouths. The following morning the boys from the village were running about and playing with these masquerade dresses.

After midnight, when the huge quantity of mishla has produced 765
its effect, the men become very noisy and quarrelsome, and their 786
actions are more or less irresponsible. It is disgusting to see them vomit on the floor and then go and drink again. Old grudges and rivalries are revived, old grievances raked up, and fist fights occur on the slightest provocation. Fortunately the women collect and hide all the weapons at the beginning of the orgy, which fact is already mentioned by Dampier (I, 10), and the fighters can not do each other great harm. Besides, the women try as hard as they can to reconcile the quarrelers, but owing to the state of excitement in which the men are, their mediation is often rewarded by blows. Finally the drinkers tumble down and remain on the ground as they fall. These festivals, however, never degenerate into the wild

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[786]

and indecent scenes which occasionally take place at the "wakes" of the Negroes who have settled on the Mosquito Coast.

THE SA͡U OF THE SUMU.—The various Sumu tribes call the festival of the dead by the name *sa͡u*, which word also means "earth," "ground," "country," "world"; the Bawihka, however, call it *sikro*, as do the Miskito, and like the latter used to carry animal masks on that occasion.

The following details apply to the *sa͡u* of the Twahka and Panamaka, the writer having been unable to obtain reliable information pertaining to that of the Ulwa. The intoxicating drink for this occasion is prepared from maize and is known by the name *puput* (lit.: "gray"). All the guests are smeared with black paint in such a manner that they are not recognizable. Members from other tribes are not admitted, but all the young Sumu from far away are expected to come. The females, being always connected with ceremonial impurity, are excluded from the festival itself, but they remain in a neighboring hut to prepare food and drink.

Before the beginning of the festivities the sukya goes to the dead person's grave and deposits there a calabash of *puput*. The drink is said to be consumed by the buried person and enter the latter's body by way of the navel. To this calabash the sukya attaches the extremity of a ball of cotton thread, which has been spun by the female relations of the deceased. Then he repairs to the hut where the *sa͡u* is to take place, unwinding the thread as he goes along, and carrying it over the lower tree branches, for it must not touch the ground. If a river has to be crossed, a little canoe with a paddle is tied there to the bank. The distance from the grave to the house may at times reach over several miles. This custom is also found among the Talamanca Indians of Costa Rica and in other areas of both hemispheres.

During the night the sukya, who is the principal actor at the *sa͡u*, practices incantations, and the spirit of the deceased appears, having found its way by the above-mentioned cotton thread. It is not visible to anyone but the sukya, who converses with it in a mysterious language and gives it the final instructions to be observed for the safe entry into the land of hereafter. Then the supernatural visitor departs. The feast lasts from two to three days, that is, when the thread is found to be broken, a sure sign that the soul has safely arrived at the presence of *Itwana* (*Itoki*).

The *sa͡u* of the Sumu is in general less noisy than the *sikro* of the Miskito. The guests eat and drink continually, but they neither sing nor dance. Melancholy music is furnished by reed flutes (*bara*), cedar drums (*pantañ*, *panatañ*), and short fifes (*una*).

MISCELLANEOUS BELIEFS REGARDING FICTITIOUS BEINGS SAID TO INHABIT THE FOREST AND THE WATER

Living in dark and gloomy forests, the limits of which are unknown 776 to them, the ideas of the Indians naturally turn toward the mysterious and wonderful, and they people in their imagination the unexplored regions of the country with fabulous monsters, or *unta dukya* as the Miskito call them generally.

Dwarfs.—In certain parts of the forest may be found some dwarfs (M.: *swdia, almuk-sirpi;* S.: *asañ mõlkni, asañ mõlhka*) of the size of children, but they are considered entirely harmless, and an encounter with one of them is even held to bring good luck.

Wandering Jew.—The belief of the existence of a wandering human being, the *tawisti seri-ka* or *sawa-seri*, so named by the Paya, has also spread to the neighboring Twahka, who have translated the name into *tiñ-suba*, but it is unknown to the other tribes; the Miskito of Rio Patuca, however, appear to call this mysterious being *tismila*. This man continually travels through the world with one of his hands placed in a cooking pot from which he is unable to extricate it. From time to time he beats with the pot against the trees, thereby producing a deep thunderlike noise, in order to break the vessel and liberate himself, but all his efforts are in vain. When he still was a boy, he was in the habit of eating the best part of the food before mealtime, leaving only the cassava and bananas for the other members of the family. His parents frequently scolded him for doing that, but he would not listen to them. One day the cooking pot closed up at the very moment he had his hand inside, and he was unable to withdraw it. Since that time he travels continuously through the bush like the Wandering Jew.

Peccary owner.—The peccaries, especially the variety called 776 warree, are said to have a keeper or owner (M.: *wari dawan;* T., P.: 825 *siwi dasiwna;* U.: *sawi dakawna*), who inhabits the caves of the interior, and occasionally retreats thereto with all the animals under his custody. In former times he is said to have been visible sometimes, accompanied by a drove of very fierce, large, white warrees. In order to guide his animals to a good feeding ground, he places with each herd a pet bird (M.: *wari yula;* T., P.: *siwi turukma;* U.: *sawi turukma;* these words literally mean "companion of the warree"). This bird, which may generally be found around a drove of peccaries, feeds probably on the ticks or other parasitic insects living on these animals. The Indians do not dare to kill it, as by such an act they would incur the wrath of the peccary owner. Some details pertaining

776 to this fictitious being are given by Bell (b: 221–224). I submit herewith
835 a Sumu story dealing with the peccary owner, which I propose naming:

The Adventures of the Peccary Hunter

539 A Sumu went out to the bush to hunt the white-lipped peccary (*Tayassu* sp.). Suddenly he came upon a drove of a white variety, called *sáuakaya*, with very long tails and tusks. All of them were very fat. Our Indian had never seen a specimen of this variety before, but he had heard of its existence from the older people, who had, however, never succeeded in killing one.

He stalked upon them, but at the very moment he got his bow and arrow ready to shoot the whole drove made off at great speed. He followed their trails, determined not to go home without one of them. After a while he caught up with them, and saw them feeding on the fruits of the hog plum tree (*Spondias lutea* L.), but again they made off all together when he was at the point of sending an arrow at them. This was repeated again and again, and our Indian was unable to make use of his arrows. Still he kept on following them.

Suddenly he saw the whole drove disappearing into a cave. He followed, although it was pitch dark inside, for he could smell and hear them. After a while he came to a wall of solid rock which blocked his passage. He then made a small incision under his tongue and applied a little blood crosswise upon the rocks. Immediately the latter receded and he was able to proceed. Again he could hear and smell the peccaries in front of him. This was repeated several times.

Finally the Indian saw a streak of light ahead of him and directly he found himself outside the cave in a strange country, which abounded in the various varieties of peccaries. The large white kind, the *sáuakaya*, must have been the favorite food of the inhabitants, for in every house they were preparing a specimen for the table. The people were not friendly toward our Sumu, and they resented his having come to their land. He explained to them how it all happened, and that he was anxious to secure some meat for his wife and children. They told him then that they were the owners of all the peccaries, and that occasionally they sent some droves to the Sumu country, so as to enable the inhabitants there to have some meat to eat occasionally. But the white peccary (*sáuakaya*), they proceeded, "is for our exclusive use and for that reason the Sumu have never been able to shoot any of them." The people fed our Sumu and gave him a whole white peccary to take back home to his family. But they warned him not to mention anything about his adventure, as that would cause his immediate death. Then he was told to close his eyes, and some one took him by the hand and led him away. After

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932

SA15 Mosquito SA15

a little while, feeling himself alone, he opened his eyes, and looking around, he found himself only a few steps from his own house. 539

Upon getting home, his wife wanted to know where he had been so long. He refused to tell the truth for fear of the revenge of the people from the peccary country, and told her that he had been lost in the bush. But she noticed that he was hiding the truth and kept on insisting that something extraordinary must have happened for his having succeeded in killing a *sa͡uakaya*.

Finally he agreed to tell. He sat in his hammock, while all the neighbors surrounded him to hear the details of his strange adventure, and then he proceeded to narrate everything that had happened to him since he left home. But the moment he finished his story he died.

WITCHES.—Certain people of either sex are supposed to be greatly addicted to witchcraft, and to be able to transform themselves at will into owls or "lechuzas" (M.: *imi yula* or *kimi yula;* S.: *yala mo͡ih*[31]). 754

Some bad people transform themselves into a smaller species of owl (T.: *yarak;* U.: *so͡i*) and in their zoömorphic form introduce themselves during the night into the huts of their enemies, when the latter are asleep, in order to carry off the small children. The Miskito do not participate in this belief.

CYCLOPS.—In the bush lives also a curious being, shaped somewhat like a giant human being, but having a head similar to that of a dog. It has only one eye, while its large mouth is at the navel. 776

WATER NYMPH.—The mermaid or water nymph (M.: *liwa;* T., P.: *was molhni;* U.: *was sirdu*) is an evil water animal, which occasionally causes snags and strong ripples where the water otherwise is very smooth. It drives the fish away so that the Indian can not catch anything, and it incites the alligator to attack the canoes and upset them. It also assumes the shape of a beautiful woman and walks on land to entice the young men down to the waterside, when suddenly it pushes its victim into the water and devours it. Its head is that of a human being, but the body resembles that of a fish. This monster is also said to inhabit the sea, where it occasions waterspouts and hurricanes; the Miskito living at the coast call it also *kabo ulaska* "sea spirit."

WAIWIN OR WAIWAN.—This name is applied by Miskito, Sumu, Rama, and Creoles to a black, doglike bush animal, with a nose shaped like that of the large anteater and with fiery eyes similar to balls of fire. It corresponds approximately to the "cadejo" of the Ladinos. Its claws rattle on the ground as it runs along with great swiftness. It spits fire and does not do any harm if left unmolested, but will throw down on the ground any one trying to stop it. There 825 is also said to exist a white variety. Bell (a: 254) describes it as a terrible monster, like a horse, but with "jaws fenced round with horrid teeth," whose native place is the sea, whence it issues from time to time to its summer residence on the hills, and at night roams about the forest in search of human and other prey.

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[31] Lit., "people of the stars."

Anthropoid ape.—On the unexplored mountain tops is said to be found a tailless anthropoid ape (*ulak, uluk*), reminding of the gorilla, orang-outang, or chimpanzee of the Old World. It is of erect position, about 5 feet in height, covered with black hair, and has the teeth turned backward. It is greatly feared, as it is supposed to carry off human beings of the opposite sex. This belief is also found among the other populations of the Mosquito Coast; the Rama and the Creoles call this ape *yohó* or *yuhó*, while the Paya and Ladinos apply to it the Spanish-Mexican name *sisimite* or *chichimite.*[92] Some Indians claim that this mysterious being has been seen several times during the last 20 years around the Guarunta Mountains, which extend northward of the lower Rio Coco. C. Acuña refers to men from South America with their feet turned backward. (Relation of the Great River Amazon. London, 1698, p. 158.)

Kaswaki, wakumbai.—There is a wasp-eating bird, traveling in flocks, which is greatly feared by the Indians. It gives out an unearthly cry, somewhat like a hoarse human voice, and is known by the onomatopoeic names of *cacao* (Spanish), *kata͡uhkata͡u* (M.), *kula͡u* (T.), and *kata͡uhki* (U.). The Miskito also call it *pnamaka yula* "companion of the Panamaka," while the Creoles have given it the name *buckra quam* "white man's guan."

The Indians do not dare to kill this bird, as that would bring about the sudden appearance of a bluish, horse-shaped ghost (M.: *kaswaki*; S.: *wakumba͡i* [93]); the latter has a single leg in front and two behind, and travels through the air mounted by its owner. The simple sight of this supernatural being is supposed to cause death.

Luhpalili (M.), Tisnini (S.).—This is a long quadruped of short stature, somewhat resembling a weasel, of a pretty black color, but with spotted head. It does not harm any human being, but is greatly feared by all animals, large and small. It chases especially larger beasts, like the jaguar and the puma, and kills them by introducing itself into their stomach. 825

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[92] Regarding the alleged discovery of an anthropoid ape on the borderland between Colombia and Venezuela see Georges Montandon, Découverte d'un singe d'apparence anthropoide en Amérique du Sud, in Journal de la Société des Americanistes de Paris, Paris, 1929, fasc. I, pp. 183–195, and fasc. II, pp. 411–412.

[93] This name appears to be phonetically related to the word *akamboue*, by which term the Island Carib, in the language of the males, called the spirit of a person (C. de Rochefort, Histoire naturelle et morale des Iles Antilles de l'Amérique, Rotterdam, 1665, p. 471).

Water tiger.—The water tiger (M.: *li lamya;* S.: *was nawa*) is supposed to be a manateelike animal, but covered with otterlike, glossy hair and a mane. Different species are said to exist, which have the same variety of color as the various species of Felis, the black variety being, however, the most common. This beast has webbed feet and walks awkwardly on land, but it is very swift in the water. It is found chiefly in the larger rivers among the rocks, and will devour any one swimming in the neighborhood or falling into the water; domestic animals and even men are said to have occasionally fallen victim to it. The Indians claim to have shot at it, but never succeeded in killing a specimen.

Gigantic boa constrictor.—A very large waula or boa constrictor (M.: *waūla tara;* T.: *waūla;* U.: *wayil*) with two horns on the head like a deer [24] is said to inhabit certain large lagoons in the pine ridges, far away from the nearest Indian village. It is claimed that the common waula or boa turns into such a monster when it reaches old age, and that it then retreats into deep lagoons. Man has no power to kill such a boa constrictor, as bullets have no effect on it; it can be destroyed only by a stroke of lightning.

The creeks leading to the lagoons inhabited by the monster are generally rich in all sorts of game, for no one dares to ascend them. It is claimed that in case anyone should be foolhardy enough to paddle up such a creek, presently a rumbling of thunder is heard; then the water reverses its course, flowing at a tremendous speed back to the lagoon directly into the mouth of the boa constrictor, which swallows the canoe with the intruder. The boat-bill heron (M.: *ukaka;* S.: *awahia*), a most uncanny night bird, is said to be found at the mouth of such creeks in order to warn off intruders.

FABLES OR TALES DEALING WITH BEASTS AND BIRDS

The Miskito know a great number of tales in which animals and birds act, think, and talk like human beings; they are supposed to possess spirits and to live, eat, drink, love, hate, and die just like the Indians. 538 771

These fables remind somewhat of the adventures of Anansi—a sort of god or culture hero—of the Gold Coast; or, Turtle of the Slave Coast; or, Hare (the Brer Rabbit of the United States Negroes) among the Bantu. Heath (a: 52) has drawn attention to the re-

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[24] For this reason the Ladinos call it "masacuate" (from the Mexican *masatl* "deer" and *coatl* "serpent").

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932

SA15 Mosquito SA15

538 171 semblance of these fables with the "anancy" or "nancy" stories[95] of Jamaica, so that one can hardly doubt a common origin, and these stories are certainly African.

The following Miskito fable has been given in the Indian tongue by Berckenhagen.[96] I submit herewith the English translation thereof under the title:

WHY THE HOWLING MONKEY NEVER DESCENDS FROM THE TREES

538 The tapir and the howling monkey went together into the forest. The tapir was foolish enough to play on a flute which he had inherited. When the howling monkey heard that he asked to buy the flute, but the tapir refused to sell the instrument, and kept on playing it. Then the howling monkey had an idea and he said to the tapir as follows: "As you are unwilling to sell the flute, just lend it to me for a moment to try it; whenever I shall have a flute I will also let you have it." Thereupon the foolish tapir handed the flute to the monkey. Immediately the latter hurried up a tree, whence he kept on blowing the flute without stopping. The tapir then wanted his property back, but the monkey paid no attention to him. Thereupon he became very angry and ran hither and thither in the water and among the spiny vegetation, but the howling monkey kept on playing the instrument. The tapir then decided to lie in wait for the howler, determined to kill him wherever he should find him on account of the flute. For fear of that the howling monkey does not dare to descend from the trees, not even in order to drink, and he quenches his thirst with the moisture from the leaves of the vegetation.

Beware of giving away your inheritance.

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[95] *Anancy* or *anansi* is the term for spider in the Chi language of western Africa; this arachnid plays a great rôle in the larger part of the folk tales of the West coast of Africa from Cape Verde to Cameroon. The name "anancy story" is applied nowadays by the Jamaican Negroes to any legend, myth, or fairy tale which is being told at night, especially during a "wake." Our rural European populations likewise believe that a real ghost story ought to be told at night around the fireside.

[96] Grammar of the Miskito Language, by H. Berckenhagen. Bluefields, Nicaragua, 1894, p. 81.

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932

SA15 Mosquito SA15

GLOSSARY

104

Agouti.—A savory rodent (*Dasyprocta* sp.), called "guatuso" by the Ladinos and "coney" by the Creoles.

Anancy story.—An African story having the mythical spider, or ananci, as hero.

Annatto.—A shrub or small tree (*Bixa orellana* L.), also known by the Spanish name "achiote" or "achote."

Baboon.—The Creole name for the howling monkey (*Mycetes* sp.); it is also used in British Guiana.

Balsa.—A bombaceous lightwood tree (*Ochroma lagopus* Sw.).

Barbecue.—To smoke-dry; also the name of the wooden stage upon which the meat is laid to be smoke-dried; also a crude wooden stage erected by the axman to stand upon when engaged in cutting down large trees.

Bátana (Miskito: *batana* "fat," "oil").—A hair oil made by the Miskito Indians of the kernel contained in the seeds of the oil palm (*Elaeis melanococca* Gaertn.).

Bateau.—A large river canoe.

Bijagua.—A marantaceous plant (*Calathea insignis* Peters), the large leaves of which are used as wrapping paper; the Creoles call it by the Miskito [illegible] *waha*.

Bocatora.—Creole name for the yellow fresh-water turtle.

Bratara (Miskito: *bratara*).—Creole designation for a species of bamboo.

Breadnut tree.—A moraceous tree (*Helicostylis ojoche* K. Sch.); it is [illegible] known by the Spanish name "masica."

Bulpis.—Miskito name of a skin disease which is very common among the Indians.

Calabash.—The fruit of a common tree of the Bignonia family (*Crescentia cujete* L.).

Cassava.—A valuable food plant (*Manihot* sp.).

Cay.—Island, not necessarily marine, but applied to islets in streams and even to clumps of vegetation; the Miskito use the word *dakura* in the same manner.

Chigoe.—A species of flea (*Sarcopsylla penetrans*) which penetrates into the flesh and may cause painful sores.

Cohune ridge.—Area dotted with cohune or corozo palms (*Attalea cohune*); the land of such districts is very fertile.

Craft.—A small seagoing canoe.

Creek.—Applied to any tributary of a river.

Creole.—Applied to native Negroes, Mulattoes, or Zambos of English speech.

Dory (Miskito: *duri*, *dori*).—A keeled canoe.

Falls.—Applied also to runs and rapids.

Gibnut.—Local English name for the paca.

Haulover.—Narrow neck of land separating two water sheets, so called from the habit of hauling canoes over them.

Hicatee.—Creole name for the black fresh-water turtle.

Hulero (Local Spanish: *hule* "rubber").—A rubber collector.

Isewilly (Miskito: *islu*).—A species of edible lizard.

Island.—*See* "Cay."

Jigger.—*See* "Chigoe."

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932

SA15 Mosquito SA15

104 JOHN CROW.—The black vulture or turkey buzzard.

LADINO.—Applied to the Spanish-speaking Central Americans; the Creoles call them "Spaniards."

LION.—Common term for the puma or cougar.

MACHETE.—Spanish name for a heavy cutlasslike knife.

MACLALA (Miskito: *maklala*).—Creole name of a small species of lizard.

METATE (Aztec: *metlatl*).—Spanish name for a slightly concave stone on which maize is ground with the aid of another stone shaped like a rolling-pin.

MISHLA (Miskito: *misla*).—General designation for the fermented beverages of the Indians.

MOLINILLO.—Spanish name for a small stick used to stir a beverage made from ground cacao and maize.

MOUNTAIN COW.—Common name for the tapir.

NANCY STORY.—*See* "Anancy story."

PACA.—A very savory rodent (*Coelogenys paca* or *Cuniculus* sp.), called "tepescuinte" by the Ladinos and "gibnut" by the Creoles.

PEJIVALLE.—A species of palm (*Guilielma utilis* Oerst.), known to the Creoles by the Indian name *supa*.

PINE RIDGE.—Area dotted with pine trees (*Pinus tenuifolia* Benth.).

PITA.—*See* "Silk grass."

PITPAN.—An unkeeled canoe, used for river travel.

QUAM (Miskito: *kwamu*).—Creole name for the large guan (*Penelope* sp.).

RIDGE.—Zone or belt of vegetation; does not imply elevation.

SILK-COTTON TREE.—A gigantic bombaceous tree (*Ceiba pentandra* Gaertn. or *Bombax* sp.).

SILK GRASS.—A bromeliaceous plant (*Karatas plumieri*), called "pita" by the Ladinos.

SNOOK (Dutch: *snoek* "pike").—A large eatable fresh-water fish, resembling the European pike and equally voracious.

SPANIARD.—*See* "Ladino."

SQUASH.—Local English name for the coati or pisote (*Nasua narica*); the name is also met with in British Guiana.

SUKYA.—The shaman or priest-doctor among the Miskito and Sumu.

SUPA.—*See* "Pejivalle."

TAMAL.—A dish made of crushed maize, which is wrapped in large leaves and boiled in water.

TANIA.—A valuable food plant (*Xanthosoma sagittifolium* Schott.).

TIGER.—Common name for the jaguar.

TOMAGOFF (Spanish: *tamagás*).—A common poisonous snake.

TUBA.—Miskito name for a food fish found in almost every stream.

TUNU.—Miskito name of a tree closely allied to the rubber tree (*Castilla* sp.), the bark of which is pounded into cloth; also applied to any kind of bark cloth.

WABUL.—A nourishing drink made of mashed green bananas.

WAHA.—*See* "Bijagua."

WAIKA (Miskito: *waika* "cousin" or "friend").—Nickname given in British Honduras to all Miskito.

WARREE (Miskito: *wari*).—The white-lipped peccary (*Tayassu* sp.).

WAULA.—Miskito name for the boa snake.

WILD CANE.—A member of the grass family (*Gynerium saccharoides*).

YAM.—A valuable food plant (*Dioscorea* sp.).

YUMU.—Miskito name for a sort of stomach ache.

113

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SA15 Mosquito SA15

113

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1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932

SA15 Mosquito SA15

INDEX

Page

- Abortion, practice of 152
- Acrocomia vinifera, use of 100
- Adornment. *See* Ornamentation.
- Adultery, punishment for 103
- Adzes, use of 37–38
- African slaves, Indians influenced by marriage with 15
- Agouti, domesticated 58
- Agriculture—
  - influence of, on forests 61
  - on the Mosquito Coast 60–65
- Alligators, method of catching 72
- Amazon stones, green, as charms 81
- Amulets. *See* Charms.
- Amusements, described 112–118
- Anacardium occidentale, mentioned 65
- Ananas sativus, mentioned 65
- Andropogon nardus, use of 118
- Animals—
  - domestic, of foreign origin 58
  - domestication of 57–60
  - of the Mosquito Coast 5–6
  - superstitions regarding 123–124
  - treatment of 161
  - young, suckled by women 58
- Annatto, cultivation of 65, 94
- Anona muricata, mentioned 65
- Anona palustris, use of 66
- Anthropoid ape, belief concerning 106
- Anthropophagy. *See* Cannibalism.
- Antiguales, location of 42–43
- Ants, leaf-carrying, as food 88
- Armor, of plaited reed 73
- Arrow poison, use of 73
- Arrows—
  - blunt, use of 76
  - described 74, 75
  - fishing, described 75–76
  - hunting, described 76
  - *See also* Bow and arrow.

Page

- Artocarpus communis, mention of 65
- Attalea—
  - habitat of 5
  - use of 94
- Attalea cohune, use of 30, 100
- Attic, use of 30
- Authorities on the Mosquito Coast 9–12
- Axes, Indian use of 36
- Axes, stone—
  - Creole use for 135
  - described 36–37
  - Ladinos' use for 135
  - monolithic 36–37
  - *See also* Celts.
- Bactris horrida, use of 27
- Bags, carrying, made of bark fiber 52
- Balsa, occurrence of 5
- Bamboo, used as food 90
- Banak tree, use of 56
- Bananas—
  - beverage made from 95–96
  - Chinese or dwarf 62
  - ensilage made of 91
  - introduced from Canary Islands 61
- Bark—
  - cloth made from 47–48
  - used for bedding 32
- Bark cloth, manufacture of 47
- Bark fibers, use of 52
- Barter—
  - articles of 40
  - of women, for tools 85
- Basketry on the Mosquito Coast 52
- Bateau, description of 55
- Bawihka—
  - a subtribe of the Sumu 14
  - habitat of 15, 17
  - population of 14
- Beadwork, ornaments of 26, 53
- Beans, cultivation of 63
- Beds, primitive Indian 32

000

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

000

Page

Bees, semidomesticated 58
Beliefs—
  concerning fictitious beings .. 165–169
  religious 126–132
  superstitious 123–130
Bell, Charles, Mosquito country described by 11
Betrothal of children 147
Beverages—
  fermented 98–101
  intoxicating 98–101
  nonfermented 96–98
  soured, preparation of 97–98
  storage of 34
Birds—
  domestication of 58
  of ill omen 123–128
  of the Mosquito Coast 6
  wasp-eating, belief concerning 168
Birthmarks, belief concerning. 151
Bixa orellana—
  cultivation of 65
  use of 24
Black Carib—
  habitat of 6
  reference to 63
Blowgun, use of 73
Bluefields Lagoon, shell heaps on 72
Boa—
  an extinct subtribe of the Sumu 15
  habitat of 15
Boa constrictor, gigantic, belief concerning 169
Body painting—
  for festival 82
  object of 24–25
Bones of the dead, disposal of 156
Bovallius, mention of 12
Bow—
  description of 75
  musical, described 113–115
Bow and arrow—
  preferred for hunting 75
  used in fishing 70
  See also Arrows.
Bowls—
  ancient carved 43–44
  wooden, described 36

Page

Boys, games of 116–117
Breastplates—
  metal 26
  twisted cotton 73
Bridges made by felling trees .. 54
Brindeau, Auguste, mention of work of 12
British Museum, reference to .. 44
Bromelia pinguin, use of 90
Buccaneers—
  Miskito assistance to 86
  relations of, with the Miskito 85
  writings of, on the Mosquito Coast 10–11
Burdens, method of carrying .. 39
Burial customs—
  of the Miskito 155–157
  of the Sumu 157–158
Burial grounds, location of .. 157
Burials—
  in huts 156
  secondary 156, 157
Byrsonima crassifolia, use of. 120
Cacao—
  cultivation of 64
  drink prepared from 97
  expeditions for purpose of stealing 40
Cacao beans, employed as money 40
Cachito tree, medicinal use of. 122
Cactus, cultivation of 64
Calaba, occurrence of 5
Calabash tree, use of 65
Calabashes—
  as models for pottery 49
  designs engraved on 53
  used as dishes 35
  used as water canteens 34
Calophyllum brasiliense—
  mention of 5
  use of 56
Calyptrogyne sarapiquensis, use of 90
Camotillo, poison made from. 137–138
Candles, manufacture of 33
Cane, wild, use of, for arrows .. 75
Cannibalism among the Sumu and Miskito 55, 89
Canoes, types of 54
Capsicum, cultivation of 65
Capsicum annuum, use of 92

000

Page
Capsicum frutescens, use of 93
Carapa guianensis—
  compared with mahogany 56
  use of 27
Carib. *See* Black Carib.
Carica papaya, mentioned 65
Carving on stone 43–44
Cassava—
  cultivation of 62
  fermented drink made from 99
  intoxicating drink made from 161
Castilla—
  mention of 5
  use of 23, 47, 48
Catacamas, destruction of town of 86
Cattle owned by the Indians 58–59
Cedar—
  canoes made of 55
  Spanish or West Indian, habitat of 5
  use of 23, 55
Cedrela, use of 23, 66
Ceiba pentandra—
  mention of 5
  use of 56
Celibacy, attitude toward 149
Celts, stone—
  superstitions regarding 134–135
  See also Axes.
Ceremonial, secret, for training warriors 81–82
Ceremonies—
  curing 124
  initiation 141–142
  marriage 147
Chamaedorea, use of 98
Character of the Indians 104–105
Charms—
  Christian emblems used as 131
  discussion of 134
  for fishing 72
  for hunting 80–81
Chayote, cultivation of 68
Chicle, use of 33
Chiefs—
  dress of 22
  hereditary 101
  insignia of 101
  position of 101
Chigoes, habits of 119

Page
Childbirth, customs concerning 150–151
Children—
  betrothal of 147
  birth and education of 150–153
  care of 152
  death of, from whooping cough 121
  infected with intestinal parasites 120
  language spoken by 13
  manner of carrying 152
Chile peppers, cultivation of 65
Chiriqui Indians, gold ornaments made by 41
Chiriqui Lagoon, slave-hunting expeditions of 84
Chocó Indians, reference to 73
Chontal, application of the name 15
Chontales—
  application of the name 9
  destruction of settlements of 86
Chorotega—
  books made by 46
  described by Oviedo 9
Christianity, attitude toward 131
Chucurures, settlement of 14
Cinchona, use of bark of 118
Circumcision, practice of 29
Citrullus vulgaris, mentioned 65
Cleanliness, Indian, compared with European 118
Climate of the Mosquito Coast 3–4
Clothing—
  described 23–24
  making of 24
  men's 22
  women's 22
  See also Costume.
Clubs, description of 74
Coati, domesticated 58
Coca, chewing of 94
Cochineal insect, breeding of 64
Coconut palm, use of 64
Cocos nucifera, use of 64
Collinson, John, Mosquito country described by 11
Colocasia, reference to 62

050

Page
Columbus, Mosquito Coast discovered by 1
Commodities, interchange of 40
Communal houses, former use of 31
Conches, used as trumpets 112
Contests of strength 117
  See also Endurance; Ordeals.
Convalescence, customs observed for 125
Cooking. *See* Food.
Copaifera officinalis, used medicinally 122
Copalchi, use of bark of 118
Corkwood, mention of 5
Corn. *See* Maize.
Corn Islands, reference to 62
Corobici tribe, habitat of 19
Costa Rica, Miskito expeditions into 87
Costume—
  for festivals 23
  of masqueraders 172, 163
  See also Clothing.
Cotton—
  articles woven of 50–51
  cultivation of 50, 65
  textiles of 50–51
Coumarouna oleifera, use of 27
Courtship, use of drugs or herbs in 145
Couvade, traces of, among Sumu and Miskito 151
Cradles, use of 32
Creation myth of the Sumu 130
Cremation, occasional use of 157
Creoles of the Mosquito Coast 7
Crescentia cujete, use of 65
Crime—
  infrequency of 104
  punishment of 102–104
Cucurbita pepo, cultivation of 63
Curatella americana, use of 35
Cyclops, belief in 167
Dampier, William, brief account of 10
Dances—
  at festival, described 162
  individual 115
  of rejoicing 115
Davilla kunthii, use of 35

Page
Days, counting of 109
Death, customs connected with 153–155
Debts, means of collecting 103
Deer—
  domesticated 58
  hunting of 79
  spotted, belief concerning 81
Deformation of the body 28–29
Deformities, attitude toward 21
Deluge, legend of 130–131
Depilation, practice of 27–28
Diagnosis, method used in 123
Dialium, use of 30
Diarrhea, remedy for 120
Dirge, example of 114
Diseases—
  and their cure 118–126
  supposed cause of 123
Distilling, knowledge of 98
Divining rod of the Sumu 135
Divorce, causes for 150
Dogs—
  customs concerning 59–60
  hunting with 78–79
Dori, application of the name 55
Dreams, importance of 139
Dress. *See* Clothing; Costume.
Drinks. *See* Beverages.
Drums—
  described 111
  used for signaling 111
Dugout, making of 55
Dwarfs, belief in 165
Dwellings—
  description of 30–31
  materials used in 30
Dynamite, use of, to obtain fish 71
Dysentery, cure for 120
Ear ornaments 27
Ears, deformation of 29
Eclipses, belief regarding 136
Eddoes, cultivation of 62
Education of children 152–153
Eggs, tortoise, valued as food 69
Elaeis melanococca, use of 27, 94, 96
Emery wood, use of 56
Endocannibalism, practice of 157

000

Page

Endurance—
  tests of, before marriage 146
  trials of 82
  See also Contests; Ordeals.
English people—
  assisted by Miskito in Jamaica 87
  relations of, with the Indians 85
Ensilage made of foodstuffs 91
Enterolobium cyclocarpum, use of 56
Epidemics, treatment of 125
Esquemeling. *See* Exquemelin.
Eugenia jambos, mention of 65
Exquemelin, work of, on the buccaneers 10
Facial painting 25
Fans used in firemaking 33
Feast, organised for convalescents 125
Feathers, production of artificial color in 26
Featherwork described 26
Fellechner, A., mention of 11
Festival of the dead, described 161–164
Fevillea cordifolia, medicinal use of 122
Fibers—
  bark, use of 52
  silk-grass, use of 52
Ficus, use of 48
Fig tree, belief concerning 139
Fire dance, an ordeal for the sukya 142
Firearms, introduction of 76–77
Fireflies, use of 33
Firemaking, method of 33
Fireplace described 30–31
Fish—
  caught in poisoned water 70
  method of cooking 89
  obtained by use of dynamite 71
Fish pots, use of 71
Fishhooks, manner of using 69
Fishing, methods used in 65–72
Fishing nets, use of 69–70
Flutes, description of 112

Page

Food—
  care of 33
  customs connected with 88–91
  offered to the dead 156
  plants used for 61–65
  preparation of 88–91
  preservation of 89
  serving of 88
  sources of 88
  sweetening of 94
Footgear on the Mosquito Coast 23
Foreigners—
  diseases introduced by 121
  influence of contact with 105
Fowls, domestic 59
Frijolillo shrub, use of 123
Fröbel, Julius, contact of, with the Ulwa 11
Frogs—
  as food 88
  secretions of, used as arrow poison 74
Fruit trees—
  indigenous 64
  of foreign origin 65
Fruits, wild, important for food 90
Furnishings, household 32–33
Game on the Mosquito Coast 77–81
Games and sports 116–118
Garif—
  habitat of 6
  origin of 7
Geonoma, use of 30
Girsewald, K. von, mention of 12
Gods, minor, belief in 126
Gold mining on the Mosquito Coast 41–42
Gossypium peruvianum, cultivation of 65
Government of the Miskito and Sumu 101–102
Gramalxo, Lourenço, slave ship commanded by 17
Graves, marked by cairns 157
Grossmann, Guido, mention of work of 12
Guanacaste tree, canoes made from 56
Guarea caoba, use of 27

000

Page

GUATACÁN, occurrence of 5
HAIR, growth of 21
HAIR OILS, use of 27
HAIRDRESSING 27
HAMMOCKS—
  of bark fiber 52
  use of 32
HARPOON, description and use of 67–68
HARROWER, D. E., mention of .. 12, 36
HAYA, DIEGO DE LA, protest of .. 85
HEAD DEFORMATION, practice of .. 28
HEADGEAR on the Mosquito Coast 23
HEATH, G. R., mention of work of 12
HESSE, C. L. C., mention of 11
HEUHAUS, DOCTOR, mention of collection of 37
HIPPOMANE MANCINELLA, use of 73
HOE, use of 38
HONEY—
  beverage made from 95
  used for sweetening 58
HOOKWORM, prevalence of 120
HORSES, on the Mosquito Coast .. 59
HOUSE POSTS, carved 53
HUISCOTOL PALM, use of 27
HUNTING CUSTOMS 77–81
HUNTING GROUND, travel to 78
HUNTING IMPLEMENTS described 73–77
HYGIENE, Indian 118
HYMENAEA COURBARIL, use of .. 33, 122
IGUANA, eggs of, as food 80
ILLUMINATION, means of 33
IMMORTALITY—
  belief in 158
  Miskito conception of 159
  Sumu conception of 160
IMPLEMENTS—
  Agricultural 60
  fishing 65
  stone 35, 36–38
INDUSTRIES. *See* OCCUPATIONS.
INFANTICIDE—
  attitude toward 102
  practice of 152
INITIATION CEREMONY of the sukya 141–142
INJURY, BODILY, payment for 102
INSECTS—
  of the Mosquito Coast 6
  sores caused by 119

Page

INTERMARRIAGE of Miskito with foreigners 13
INTOXICATION—
  among Sumu and Miskito .. 98
  at festivals 163, 164
IPECACUANHA, used medicinally. 122
IPOMOEA BATATAS, cultivation of 62
IRONWOOD, use of 30
JAMAICA, Indians sold to traders of 85
JATROPHA CURCAS, medicinal use of 122
JAVELIN, description and use of 65–66, 74
JEREMY, King of the Miskito, treaty made by 87
JINOTEGA, destruction of town of 86
JUIGALPA, destruction of town of 86
KISSING, attitude toward 108
KNIVES of bamboo 35
KU—
  an extinct subtribe of the Sumu 15
  habitat of 15
KUKRA—
  a subtribe of the Sumu 14
  cannibalism of 89
  habitat of 15
  practically extinct 14
LABOR, division of 39–40, 60, 77
LADE, CAPT. ROBERT, reference to 87
LADINOS—
  beverage made by 96, 97
  custom of 135
  distilling among 98
  increase of, on Mosquito Coast 7
LAGENARIA VULGARIS, use of 33
LANCES, described 69, 74
LANGUAGE, MISKITO—
  allied to Sumu 17
  dialects of 14
LANGUAGES used by the Sumu .. 16
LAURO, Miskito Indian, account of 143
LEATHER, use of 52
LEAVES, used as sandpaper 35

ooc

Page

Legend—
- Miskito migration 18–19
- of origin of Kiawa rocks 127
- of the deluge 130–131
- of the Wiswis 116
- origin, of the Sumu and Miskito 16–17
- Sumu origin, reference to 128
- *See also* Myths; Stories; Tales.

Legs, deformation of 29
Lehmann, Walter, investigations of 12
Lévy, Paul, mention of 12
Lianas—
- used as ropes 57
- water obtained from 95

Lignum vitae, occurrence of 5
Lip ornaments 26
Lizards, capture and treatment of 80
Longevity of the Indians 21
Loom, described 51
Love medicines, belief in 145
Love songs, examples of 114
Lussan, Ravenau de, account by, of the buccaneers 10–11
Lycopersicum esculentum, cultivation of 63
Machete, use of, by Indians 35–36
Mahogany camps, Indians employed in 39
Mahogany trees—
- mention of 5
- used for canoe making 55

Maize—
- cultivation of 63
- drinks made from 96–97, 99–100, 164
- ensilage made of 91
- preparation of, for food 90
- preservation of 91

Malaria, cause and treatment of 118
Manatee, capture of 67
Manchineel tree, poison obtained from 73
Mangifera indica, mentioned 65
Manihot aipi, cultivation of 62
Manihot palmata, cultivation of 62
Manihot utilissima, cultivation of 62

Page

Maroons, war on, in Jamaica 87
Marriage customs 145–150
- *See also* Intermarriage.

Martin, A., mention of work of 12
Martinez, Francisco, ethnological contributions of 12
Masks—
- clay, mixed with gold dust 50
- of dead chiefs 50, 157
- representing spirits, at festival 163

Masqueraders at festival 162
Matagalpa, destruction of town of 86
Matagalpa language—
- dialect of 6
- extinct 6

Medicine man. *See* Sukya.
Medicines, native 122
Men—
- clothing of 22
- occupations of 39, 60, 77

Menstrual customs 148–149
Metal working, on the Mosquito Coast 41–42
Metates—
- ancient carved 43
- described 42, 43
- use of 34

Mierisch, Bruno, mention of 12
Migration legend, Miskito 18–19
Milk, as a beverage 95
Miskito Indians—
- ascendancy of, over other tribes 105
- habitat of 1, 84
- physical characteristics of 19–21
- population of 12
- probable origin of 17
- relationship of, with the Sumu 16–19
- skill of, as boatmen 57
- subtribes of 13
- synonyms for name of 13
- territory occupied by 13
- theory concerning emigration of 93
- warfare conducted by 82–84

Missionaries—
- Moravian, work of 12
- on the Mosquito Coast 131–132

Moccasins, mention of 23

000

Page
Monkeys—
  as food 5, 88
  esteemed as game 79
  tamed for pets 57
Monstrosities, belief concerning 129
Months—
  method of calculating 109
  names of 110
Moravians, success of, among the Indians 132
Mortars, wooden, distribution of 34
Mortuary customs. *See* Death.
Mosquito Coast—
  authorities on 9–12
  climate of 3
  ethnographical exploration of 9–12
  history of 8–9
  inhabitants of 1, 6–8
  origin of the name 1
  orography of 1–2
  streams of 2
  territory known as 1
  vegetation of 4–5
Mother-in-law taboo 147–148
Mourning customs 154–155
Mulattoes of the Mosquito Coast 7
Müller, Dr., mention of 11
Murder, punishment for 102
Musa chinensis, cultivation of 62
Musa paradisiaca normalis, cultivation of 62
Museum of the American Indian, mention of 36, 44
Museum of the Moravian Mission, mention of 37
Music—
  at festival of the dead 162, 164
  See also Songs.
Musical bow, description of 112–113
Musical instruments described 111–113
Myroxylon pereirae, used medicinally 122
Myth, creation, of the Sumu 130
Names, personal—
  avoidance of use of 106, 107
  exchange of 107
  preferences in 105–107
  taboo concerning 106, 153

Page
Naming of children 105, 106
Narcotic, tobacco used as 91–92
Necklaces, materials used in 25–26, 89
Negroes—
  intermarriage of, with Indians 7, 17
  of the Mosquito Coast 7
Neuhaus, Dr. Johs., material collected by 12
Nicarao—
  art of writing possessed by 46
  coca chewed by 94
  described by Oviedo 9
Nose ornaments 26
Numeral system 110
Obeah. *See* Voodooism.
Occupations—
  of men 39–40, 60, 77
  of women 39, 60
Ochroma lagopus—
  mention of 5
  use of 66
Oil palm—
  beverage made from 96
  use of 27
Oils, cooking, extraction of 94
Okuli, rank and office of 142–143
Omens, belief in 132
Orchids, epiphytic, occurrence of 5
Ordeals—
  fire dance 142
  premarriage 146
  training young men by 82
Origin legends—
  of the Miskito and Sumu 16–17
  See also Creation myth.
Ornamentation, bodily 24–28
Ornaments—
  for the ears 27
  lip 26
  nose 26
  of feathers 28
  of gold 41
Oryza sativa, cultivation of 63
Oviedo, Gonzalo Fernández de, tribes discussed by 9
Paca, domesticated 58
Paddles, canoe, described 56
Painting, body 24–25
Palm, pejivalle—
  cultivation of 63–64
  fruit of, as food 90

000

Page
Palms—
  of the Mosquito Coast 5
  oil extracted from 94
  pith of, as food 90
  roofing made from 30
  use of 48, 93
  wine made from 100
Panamaka, a great Sumu sukya 128
Panamaka Indians—
  a subtribe of the Sumu 14
  habitat of 14
  population of 14
Paya Indians—
  described by Espinosa 10
  distilling among 98
  habitat of 6
  population of 6
  raids on, by the Miskito 83
  reference to 62
Peabody Museum of Harvard University, mentioned 36
Peccaries—
  belief in an owner of 165
  hunting of 79
  meat of, a favorite food 88
  story relating to hunter of 166
Pejivalle palm, cultivation of 63–64
Penelope cristata, mention of 33
Peppers, use of 92
Pereira, Eduardo, legend supplied by 19
Persea gratissima, mentioned 65
Pestles, wooden, single and double headed 34
Phaseolus vulgaris, cultivation of 63
Physical characteristics of Sumu and Miskito 19–21
Phytolacca decandra, a food of the Indians 90
Pictographs—
  authors of 45
  location of 44
Pigment, manufacture of 24
Pigs kept by the Miskito 89
Pillars, carved stone 44
Pine, longleaf, southern limit of 5
Pineapples, potent drink made from 99
Pinus tenuifolia—
  mention of 5
  use of 33

Page
Pipes, use of, by women 92
Pita fiber, use of 52
Pitpan, description of 54
Place names, Miskito, origin of 84
Plant life of the Mosquito Coast 4–5
Plantains—
  beverage made from 95–96
  cultivated by Miskito and Sumu 61–62
  ensilage made of 91
Plantation, preparation of 60
Plants—
  medicinal use of 122–123
  See also Food plants.
Poison—
  disseminated by witches 138
  made from camotillo 137–138
  See also Arrow poison; Poisoning.
Poisoning—
  as a means of catching fish 70
  enemies disposed of by 103
Polygala costaricensis, used medicinally 122
Polygamy, practice of 149
Population of the Miskito 12, 13
Pottery—
  among the Miskito 48
  among the Sumu 48
  clay for, tempered with ashes 49
  firing of 49–50
  forms of 49
  molding of 49
Poverty and wealth, absence of, among Indians 40
Pregnancy, beliefs concerning 120, 122, 124
Prinsu—
  an extinct subtribe of the Sumu 15
  habitat of 15
Prisoners—
  killed by the Sumu 85
  treatment of 84
Property buried with the dead 155
Prostitution, attitude toward 149
Protium, used medicinally 122
Prudery, of the Indians 24
Psidium guajava, mentioned 65
Pumpkins, cultivation of 63

000

Page

Punishment of crime 102–104
Puritans—
  colony of, on islands off Mosquito Coast 76–77
  relations of, with the Miskito 132
Quipu—
  of the Peruvians 109
  use of primitive form of 108
Quivers, for ceremonial use 76
Raccoon, domesticated 58
Rafts, use of, for transportation 57
Rain and wind, supposed control of 136
Rainbow, belief concerning 127
Rainfall on Mosquito Coast 3–4
Rama tribe—
  habitat of 6
  language of 6
  population of 6
Rattles described 111–112
Reichel, Leonhard, mention of work of 12
Relationship, terms of 105, 106
Religious beliefs 126–132
Revenge, attitude toward 102
Rheumatism—
  belief concerning 120
  treatment for 120
Rice, cultivation of 63
Ricinus communis, medicinal use of 122
Rio Coco, belief concerning rocks on 128
Roberts, Orlando W., account by, of the Miskito 11
Rock carvings—
  described 45
  resembling writing 46
Rosewood, occurrence of 5
Rubber—
  adulteration of 47
  method of collecting 46–47
  use of 52–53
Rubber industry, status of, on Mosquito Coast 40
Rubber tree—
  mention of 5
  use of bark of 47
Saba compared with mahogany 56
Saccharum officinarum, use of 64
Sails, use of, by the Miskito 56–57

Page

Salt—
  methods of obtaining 93
  substitute for 93–94
Salutation, form of 107
San Blas Indians—
  expedition against 83
  reference to 73
Santa Maria tree—
  mention of 5
  use of 56
Sapodilla—
  mention of 5
  use of 30
Sapota zapotilla—
  mention of 5
  use of 30
Sapper, Dr. Carl, Miskito specimens collected by 12
Sarsaparilla, medicinal use of 122
Scalping unknown on Mosquito Coast 85
Scarification of the face 29
Schneider, H. G., mention of work of 12
Schultz, A. H., mention of work of 12
Seats. *See* Stools.
Sechium edule, cultivation of 63
Segovia, destruction of town of 86
Self-control shown by the Indians 104
Selkirk, Alexander, reference to 86
Sexual life of the Miskito and Sumu 145–150
Shamans, office of 139–140
Shark, game of, played by boys 117
Shell heaps on Bluefields Lagoon 72
Shellfish as food 72
Shields, former use of 73
Sickness. *See* Diseases.
Siebörger, Wilhelm, mention of work of 12
Signaling, means of 111
Silam Indians—
  extinct Sumu subtribe 15
  habitat of 15
Silk-cotton tree—
  beliefs concerning 129
  use of 56
Skin infections described 119

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932

SA15 Mosquito SA15

Page

SLAVES—
- African, intermarriage of, with Indians 17–18
- capture of 84–85
- killed on death of master 156
- revolt of, in Jamaica 87

SLINGS, used in hunting 74

SLOANE, SIR HANS, Miskito Indians described by 11

SMALLPOX on the Mosquito Coast 121

SMILAX OFFICINALIS, medicinal use of 122

SMOKING CUSTOMS 92

SMU, a synonym for Sumu 15

SNAKE BITES—
- preventive against 137
- treatment for 122

SNAKE CHARMING, practice of 137

SNAKES, beliefs concerning 137

SNUFF, use of, unknown 92

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION of Sumu and Miskito 101–102

SONGS, Miskito 113–115

SOUL—
- beliefs concerning 158
- conception of journey of 159–160
- festival connected with journey of 161

SPANISH SETTLEMENTS raided by Miskito and buccaneers 86–87

SPEARS, description of 74

SPICES, use of 94

SPINDEN, H. J., mention of work of 12

SPINDLE, described 51

SPINNING, method of, described 51

SPIRITIST CULT, account of 144

SPIRITS, EVIL, belief in 127–128

SPONDIAS PURPUREA, mention of 65

SQUASHES, cultivation of 63

STALKING of game 75

STAVES, contest with 117–118

STINGINESS, attitude toward 104

STOMACH ACHE—
- belief concerning 119
- cure for 120

STONEWORK of the Miskito and Sumu 42–44

STOOLS—
- described 32
- of carved wood 53

Page

STORIES—
- of soul's journey to the hereafter 159–160 000
- of the peccary hunter 166–167
- *See also* LEGENDS; MYTHS; TALES.

STORY-TELLING as a pastime 115

STREAMS of the Mosquito Coast 2

STRING PUZZLES, complicated 117

STRINGS, KNOTTED, used for reckoning time 109

SUGAR, making of 94

SUGAR-CANE—
- introduced by Spaniards 38
- use of 64

SUGAR MILL, primitive, described 38

SUICIDE—
- complicated cases of 103
- method of 104
- relatives compensated for 103

SUKYA—
- diagnosis by 123
- discussion of the term 140
- future foretold by 135
- insignia of 123
- office and duties of 140–141
- rites performed by 123
- souls caught by 158
- supposed petrified remains of 128
- treatment by, of the sick 120, 122, 124
- witch poison extracted by 138

SUMU INDIANS—
- as boatmen 57
- described by Espinosa 10
- extinct subtribes of 15
- general description of 14–16
- physical characteristics of 19–21
- population of 14
- relationship of, with the Miskito 16–19
- subtribes of 14
- subtribes of, conquered by Miskito 82
- synonyms for name of 15
- territory occupied by 1, 14

SUN-GOD, Sumu belief in 129

SUPERNATURAL BEINGS, power of 126

060

Page
Supreme being, present belief in........................ 126
Surgery practiced by the sukya........................ 124
Sweetpotatoes, cultivation of.. 62
Swietenia macrophylla—
  mention of................ 5
  use of................ 55
Taboos—
  marriage................ 146
  mother-in-law................ 147
  of the name of the dead.... 153
Talamanca region, slave-hunting expeditions to.......... 84
Tales—
  dealing with beasts and birds................ 169–170
  of African origin.......... 170
Talismans. *See* Charms.
Tamarindus indica, mention of........................ 65
Tanias, cultivation of.......... 62
Tapir, as food................ 79–80
Taro, reference to............ 62
Tattooing, method of......... 25
Tecoma, occurrence of......... 5
Tecoma chrysantha, use of.... 30
Teeth, pointed by chipping.... 29
Terms of relationship........ 106
Textiles, cotton............... 50–51
Theft, punishment for......... 102
Theobroma bicolor, cultivation of........................ 64
Theobroma cacao, cultivation of........................ 64
Thomas, J. O., stone ax collected by........................ 37
Thunder, a tribal hero......... 127
Thunderbolt—
  native name for stone celts................ 37, 135
  test for................ 135
Tiger game described.......... 117
Time, reckoning of............ 106–110
Tiribi, taken as slaves......... 84
Tobacco—
  medicinal use of.......... 91
  origin of the name......... 92
  use of, as a narcotic......... 91
Tomato, apparently indigenous to Mosquito Coast.......... 63
Tongs, bamboo, use of......... 33–34
Tongula tribe, origin of....... 15

Page
Tools of the Mosquito Coast Indians........................ 25–33
Torches—
  for illumination............ 33
  use of, in fishing.......... 66, 72
Tortoise, used for food........ 66
Trachoma, occurrence of....... 121
Trade and barter............. 40–41
Traditions. *See* Legend.
Transportation by water...... 54–55
Travel, means of.............. 54
Trees—
  haunted................ 129, 139
  of the Mosquito Coast.... 5
  used in canoe making.... 55
Tule Indians, reference to..... 73
Tuñla Indians—
  cannibalism of............ 89
  origin of................ 15
Tunu cloth, preparation of.... 48
Turtle game described......... 117
Turtles, method of catching.... 68
Twahka—
  a subtribe of the Sumu.... 14
  cannibalism of............ 89
  habitat of................ 14
  population of............ 14
Twins, belief concerning........ 152
Ulwa—
  a subtribe of the Sumu.... 14
  cannibalism of............ 89
  drinks prepared by......... 100
  habitat of................ 15
  population of............ 14
  tortures inflicted by........ 89
United States National Museum, mentioned............ 36, 37
Urn burial, occasional use of.. 157
Utensils, domestic............ 33–35
Valiente Indians, subject to Miskito................ 83
Vanilla, use of................ 94
Vegetable food, method of cooking................ 90
Venereal diseases, occurrence of................ 121
Vermin, method of exterminating................ 118
Vessels—
  earthen, replaced by iron.. 34
  pottery, decorated with heads................ 50
  See also Pottery.

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932

SA15 Mosquito SA15

Page
VILLAGES, location of 29
VIROLA MERENDONIS, mention of 56
VISITORS, reception of 107–108
VIVERES, reference to tribe of 116
VOCHYSIA HONDURENSIS, use of 56
VOODOOISM—
  belief in 144–145
  introduced from Africa 144
WAIWIN, a fictitious monster 167–168
WALLS, construction of 31
WANDERING JEW, belief in a being similar to 165
WAR—
  between tribes 82–84
  choice of commander in 101
  preparation for 82
WARRIORS—
  standing of 81
  training of 81
WATER NYMPH, belief in 167
WATER TIGER, belief concerning 169
WEAPONS—
  described 73–77
  used in hunting 79
WEAVING, on horizontal loom 51
WHIPPING:
  of young people 102
  to cure pain 121
WHISTLES, BONE, used to lure game 78
WICKHAM, H. A., notes of, on the Ulwa 12
WIDOWS, remarriage of 150

Page
WILD CANE, use of, for arrows 75 000
WINE, made from palms 100
WISWIS, legend of the 116
WITCH POISON, belief in 136
WITCHES, belief in 167
WITHES, use of 5
WOMEN—
  clothing of 22
  occupations of 39, 49, 50, 60
  punishment of, for adultery 103
  quarrels among 104–105
  traded for tools 85
WOOD CARVING—
  articles decorated with 53
  character of 53
XANTHOSOME SAGITTIFOLIUM, cultivation of 62
YAMS, cultivation of 62–63
YEAR, method of calculating 109
YELLOW FEVER, origin of 121
YOSKO. *See* YUSKU.
YOUNG, THOMAS, knowledge of, concerning Indians 11
YUSKU—
  an extinct subtribe of the Sumu 15
  habitat of 15
ZAMBOS, meaning of the name 12
ZEA MAYS. *See* MAIZE.
ZIOCK, HENRY, mention of work of 12
ZIZANIA, mention of 63

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